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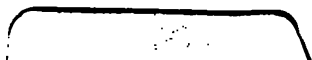
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GALLOPS AND GOSSIPS
IN THE
BUSH OF AUSTRALIA;

OR,
PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF ALFRED BARNARD.

BY SAMUEL SIDNEY,
AUTHOR OF
"THE THREE COLONIES OF AUSTRALIA," "RIDES ON RAILWAYS,"
ETC., ETC.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

1854.



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TO
CHARLES DICKENS,
This Volume,
OF WHICH MANY PAGES HAVE ALREADY APPEARED IN
"HOUSEHOLD WORDS,"
IS DEDICATED, WITH WARM FEELINGS OF ADMIRATION AND ESTEEM,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

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GALLOPS AND GOSSIPS

IN THE

BUSH OF AUSTRALIA.

CHAPTER I.

MY BIRTH AND BREEDING.

I WAS born in a seaport town, in the north of England, the youngest of a large family, and lost both my parents when I was so young that I barely remember them. My paternal grandfather was a farmer, miller, and local contractor, who had made a considerable fortune during the war, but his family was numerous and not harmonious. He survived my parents, and left me, in common with five brothers and sisters, a share in what was considered a good property, but invested in land, houses, ships, mines, and canal shares of such various value that it was difficult to ascertain what we each had to receive, even if my grandfather had not indulged himself in the luxury of making his own will. One of my aunts married a gentleman of noble lineage, as he said, whom she met at Harrogate, unable to leave because he could not pay his hotel bill; another, a most respectable attorney: one of my uncles was on the turf, and another a stock speculator. The con-

sequence was that, instead of inheriting a fortune, we inherited a law-suit, which just came into full bloom when my education became, or ought to have become, expensive. My eldest brother, Rupert, who was fourteen years my senior, inherited a farm of some two hundred acres from my mother's family; my second brother, Charles, was a surgeon in a mining district; my third brother, Thomas, went to sea, and was never heard of again. My sisters, Jane and Maria, were married, and living in London, at the time my adventures commenced.

People talk of the pleasures of childhood—I never knew them. I was a sickly brat, always puling and complaining, constantly sent from house to house, among my relatives, who all very soon and very naturally grew tired of me.

When I was seven or eight years old, I was sent to nurse to the wife of a small farmer, who, to his fifty acres, added the profits of acting as huntsman to a scratch pack of harriers, kept up by the subscriptions of neighbouring graziers, and also dealt a little in horses, for he was a good judge and a capital horseman. I see him now—a little thin man, who never grew older after hale fifty—in his corduroy breeches and gaiters, with one steel spur; a velveteen shooting jacket, much the worse for wear; with a heavy home-manufactured whip in his right hand, riding a long-tailed four-year-old down the bridle-path that led to the open moorland, followed by his pack, of sizes and breeds as various as their colours.

It was the order of the doctor, by whose advice I had been sent to these breezy wolds, that I should not be troubled with learning. I soon found my way to the stable, and passed the first happy hours I can remember, seated on the back of Dobbin, who

weekly carried Dame Clewer to market, as he stood munching his hay in the stall, while red-headed Bob, the herdsman, ploughboy, whipper-in, and man-of-all-work of the establishment, cleaned up the bits and stirrups for a show day, or mended up harness, or carved a wooden bowl. By degrees I was promoted to riding on Smiler's fat back to the pond and home again; and at length a little colour came into my pale cheek, and a little flesh on my drum-stick legs. I found favour in the sight of Reuben Clewer—Reuben the Huntsman he was called: he took me as a sort of honorary assistant into the kennel, and gave me the charge of a young fox-hound he had at walk. Soon I knew every hound, from Ardent to Zoilus, as well as he did himself, and they knew me. Bob made me a long-thonged whip, and perched me before him when we took out the hounds in the summer for exercise.

Before the season commenced I was permitted to ride an old brood mare, dam of Lord Harewood's best hunters; before the season ended I could crack my little whip and give a shrill hola without thinking whether I was on horseback or not. Two years I passed with these worthy people, gaining health, strength, and a strong taste for field sports, and imbibing the rudiments of education from a sporting schoolmaster, who, meeting me in the field, obtained leave to increase his small income, as master of an obscure endowed school, by teaching me on such days as hounds did not hunt, and trout would not rise at the fly.

As my life had been condemned by the suffrages of all the family, they did not consider it of any consequence what I did, as long as I grew stronger, cost little money, and gave no trouble.

But when I was about ten years old, one of my aunts, the attorney's wife, came to see me. She was horrified at my accent and my occupation (she found me clearing out the hounds' kennel), but rather pleased with my appearance, so she obtained leave, being childless, to take me with her to London. In less than three months she was as tired of me as I was of a town life. She tried hard, but she could not make me a well-behaved boy. I tore my clothes, hunted the cat, and was always wandering out and making the acquaintance of grooms and ostlers. From that time my unhappiness recommenced. I was sent to a series of schools, but was always in disgrace, and more than once ran away, and set off to walk two hundred miles, to rejoin Reuben the Huntsman. Once, when I was twelve years of age, I had very nearly engaged myself to Lord Bullfinch, to ride his second horse in Leicestershire. I made his acquaintance by stopping Rantipole in a lane, and bringing him back over a double fence, where he had left his lordship on his back, in the middle of that famous run from Kiddington Barn to Gipsy Gorse. Unfortunately, his lordship's head-groom had been an admirer of my aunt Raby's maid, and recognised me, in spite of uncombed hair and dilapidated costume. So I was sent back to school, with a sovereign tip from his lordship, to be handsomely whipped, and my money taken care of—that is to say, consumed in fines by the schoolmaster.

At length I had the good fortune to fall into the hands of the Reverend Doctor Nicholas Warbler, who kept a school, for the purpose of having his birds and beasts well attended to. His whole soul was in nightingales, golden pheasants, powder pigeons, two Alderney cows, and an Angora goat.

He employed a classical and mathematical tutor, besides assistants in French and every other tormenting branch of knowledge ; but we soon understood each other, and by tacit consent, compromised. On my learning to write a plain hand, and do plain sums, I was allowed to spend the greater part of my time in acting as aide-de-camp in his menagerie.

Unfortunately, this was too pleasant to last. My brother the surgeon took it into his head to examine into my proficiency in Latin, and finding me brought up hard and fast at the second line after "*Tityre tu patulæ*," had me removed at the end of a year, when I had become as great an adept at raising nightingales as the Doctor himself.

On the recommendation of a patient of my brother's, a wine-merchant, I was next sent to a school, or, as they term it, a college, in France. There I learned French and fencing, to drink *gouts* of *eau de vie*, to smoke and exchange French slang, and criticise the eyes and ankles of the girls we met in our walks. Our chief professor had a wife, twenty years younger than himself, who, wishing to learn horsemanship after the English fashion, and English at the same time, chose me, one of the mildest, slimmest, and most rustic of the English boys, as her instructor. We had horses from her uncle, who commanded a regiment of cavalry ; he taught me to use a sabre and hit a mark with a pistol, while Madame Epanchement gave me instructions in *petits soins*, gloves, boots, and cravats, not less useful. I was fifteen, small of my age, and began to read poetry and look at the moon.

It was now time that I should choose a pursuit. I wrote to my guardians, and asked them to procure me a commission in the army. One of my favourite companions was the grandson of a Duke, and the

son of a gentleman who had passed his life in investigating the comparative merits of every opera-house, gambling-house, and debtors' prison in Europe. My noble young friend gave the tone to the English part of the school, and we all despised trade as if our fathers had not been, as most were, successful butchers, bakers, tailors, or attorneys. Nothing less than a Government appointment, or the army or navy, was talked of by any of us; we had imbibed enough French to be philosophers, and heartily despised the Church. In reply to my letter, I received a long sermon from my second brother, who, in virtue of a particularly disagreeable temper, had been allowed to have his own way in everything. He told me, truly enough, that I had no fortune except a share in a Chancery suit, which might end in one year or twenty, and no interest in either the army or navy; that I might come to him as a pupil, though he did not expect any good from a person with such ridiculous notions; or I might go to my uncle Crabby, and be articled to law—he would take me without a premium. As for being a farmer, that would take more, ten times more, capital than I was ever likely to have. To cut a long story short, I went to my brother, and passed three months in making pills and mixing powders, drew teeth, performed several electrical experiments on cats and pauper patients, but found my taste did not lie toward attending on all the maladies of the human race for the hope of eventually gaining a hard livelihood from people who were always discontented with their bills in proportion to the renewed vigour of their health.

From my brother I migrated to my uncle, in Gray's Inn, where I had copied two abstracts, not without many blunders, and narrowly escaped being

coaxed into serving a writ; at the end of six months fell into a low fever from confinement, disgust, and vexation, and fully made up my mind that I was not cut out for a lawyer. Very miserable, I had serious thoughts of enlisting, but fortunately was too short for the Life Guards, while walking with a knapsack on my back and a musket on my shoulder was not to my taste.

They were now very glad to get rid of me, for it was difficult to say what I was ever likely to be fit for. I was seventeen, five feet six, and eight stone, could ride, drive, and throw a fly, write a plain hand without many blunders in spelling, and do the first four rules in arithmetic if the addition columns were not too long. I spoke French like a native, could fence as well as a corporal of Chasseurs, could hit a hat with single pistol ball at twenty paces four times out of five, and sing Kel-ruddery well enough to please a fox-hunting club; but sit still or work on a high stool, I could not: in fact, as my brother said, I was fit for nothing but to live genteelly in a cavalry regiment with an allowance of two hundred a year, by getting into debt as much more. At any rate, I was fit for nothing that required indoor work or the control of a master; for my own part, I was willing to become a whipper-in, but that the dignity of my family would not allow.

It was in this frame of mind that I met my old schoolfellow Dick Grafton, with a cab-load of outfit, besides a waggon that had gone on before, going down to the ship in which he was to emigrate to New Zealand, at that time in all the bloom of a fashionable colony. We dined, and spent a week together at Gravesend; and then I made up my mind I would be an emigrant, with no other notion

than that it was a sort of rural life, with little to do, plenty of horses to ride, and a fortune in the horizon.

My friends were too glad to get rid of me to make any objection ; but as New Zealand required—so said the flaming prospectus—men of capital, and one of my uncles had a friend in Sydney, it was decided to send me there. My outfit was soon ready, my farewells taken, and with very few regrets I bade adieu to counting-houses, offices, high stools, schoolmasters, elder brothers, long speeches of good advice, and continual lectures from my aunts on torn clothes and muddy shoes. At the last moment, on taking leave of the favourites in my family, my heart melted :—

“Some natural tears I shed,
But dried them soon.”

Yet I found something within me that I did not know before, associated not only with my sisters, but a foster-sister, daughter of old Reuben Clewer, my playmate as a child, but on my farewell visit grown into the first pretty girl I had much noticed.

Of my adventures in the bush of Australia, and many strange stories told there over the evening fire, I kept a rough log ; a habit I learned at the same time that I acquired a taste for reading on board ship ; and now, having some leisure on my hands during a hard frost, I have amused myself with stringing together what I hope may be thought amusing and not quite useless.

CHAPTER II.

MY ADVENTURES AT SEA.

THE arrangements for my leaving England having been all completed, except the choice of a vessel—that was left entirely to me, and very proud I was of the responsibility—for economy I was sent to Liverpool, not having the maxim so uncomplimentary to Liverpool ships, Scotch captains and north country owners, before my eyes.

I had three chests of useless outfit, besides a hundredweight of books, and a whole carpet-bag full of letters of introduction.

People relieved their friends, bestowed patronage, and fancied they saved postage, by writing letters of introduction to people whose fathers, uncles, or cousins they had met at dinner, or ridden with in the same conveyance; these letters being promiscuously addressed to Sydney, Adelaide, Hobart Town, and Wellington in New Zealand.

It cost me some weeks to make my choice of a ship in Liverpool Docks, for they were not so plentiful, so punctual, or so much puffed as they are now. For want of knowing any better, and partly from a dislike to crowds that has always been part of my character—a feeling which did much toward making me happy in the bush when friends and companions of the same age were miserable—I took a passage in a small, fast-sailing brig, under two hundred tons burden, which was intended to be sold for a coaster in the colony. The captain was

going out to settle ; he took his wife with him, but I was the only passenger.

Captains on shore and captains at sea are quite different creatures. This was one of the old school. On shore, he seemed like a jolly fellow, rough and good-natured—at sea, he was a perfect brute, got drunk every evening, thrashed his wife, and ill-used his men ; but, although profoundly ignorant on most subjects, a thorough seaman.

On the morning we were to sail, we lay in the stream of the Mersey, Blue Peter flying and anchor tripped ; we waited for the captain and mate so long, it seemed as if we should miss the tide. At length the captain came, as fast as two pair of oars could pull him, looking very red and angry ; no mate, but a strange man sitting in the stern sheets beside him. It seemed the mate had given him the slip at the last moment, and gone off to Mary, his landlady, whose husband had died the week before, and he had been obliged to engage the stranger, with very little inquiry. This man was a lanky north countryman, with a deadly pale face, without whiskers, a bald forehead, an immense mouth, black eyes with an awful squint, and a costume of seedy black, so that he looked much more like a hedge schoolmaster than a sailor. He carried a parcel of sea-faring clothes in his hand, which the captain had been obliged to buy for him at the nearest slopshop. He brought nothing else, but a large, very light chest, and an enormous appetite. But, in spite of his unprepossessing appearance and shore-going costume, the crew at once recognised him as a regular sea-dog. Indeed, by the time he got into his pea-coat and loose trousers, and had a fortnight of our fare, if he did not grow handsomer, he seemed, at any rate, transformed into the style of man that attracts thunders

of applause in a minor theatre as a wicked pirate. At least, that was my impression when, after a fortnight's landsman's misery, I crept on deck in the Bay of Biscay, to see the "seas" not "in mountains rolling," but as still as a mill-pool; and our mate, Mr. Clank, his complexion very much improved by sea air and salt water, taking his turn at the helm, in regular "old salt style."

I have now made the long sea voyage half-a-dozen times, and have come to the same conclusion I did at the end of my first—that there are very few who can do much real work at sea. On shore it is very easy to prepare journals, plan a course of study, lay in a store of scientific books; but when once you get into blue water, your berth becomes a very Castle of Indolence. What with sea-sickness, and the appetite that follows your recovery, you find your time pretty well consumed by eating, drinking, smoking, and dozing, relieved by reading a novel or playing a game at cards. There are exceptions, as, perhaps, on board a yacht, where you can go ashore when you please; but, as a general rule, gossip and brandy-and-water are the two great resources of a long voyage—more shame to the weakness of the passengers.

For my part, by the time I got my sea-legs I had every inducement to study, for the captain and his wife were no companions to me. I did read my store of books twice over, learned to splice a rope, and, after a fashion, to hand, reef, and steer; had a good deal of chat with an old sailor, who afterwards became one of my best hands in the Bush; but the end was, that, in spite of my instinctive prejudice, I was drawn into intimacy with the mate. He could talk, and, like most persons who can, was communicative to a degree that he must have often

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found disagreeable, if not dangerous ; but conversation was a necessity to him, and I have no doubt he would have related his adventures to a black gin or a police officer, sooner than remain silent. So I used to sit smoking in the evening, and far on into the night, while he murmured away his adventures in his strong northern burr, like a talking mountain torrent.

I soon found that my companion was a finished scoundrel, up to the chin in every sort of rascality. On shore I should never have spoken to him twice : at sea he was amusing. He had been everywhere, and in every sort of craft, according to his own account ; had had money and lived in great style ; told stories of whales, slavers, Indiamen and pirates, by the dozen. He early confided to me that nothing but misfortune would have driven him to engage in such " a miserable little tub of a craft, under such a know-nothing lubber as Captain Glum. A misfortune, Sir, that any gentleman might have fallen into."

This misfortune, he presently let me know, consisted in having been convicted of bigamy and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. He had only been discharged a couple of days, when he joined us. To hear him, he was a victim,—just one of those heroic victims of London passions one meets with in French and German novels. He ended his story by saying,—

"So I've paid the penalty ; and now I'm free, and next time I shall manage better." For already he had his eye on a third wife. After this, before turning in for the night, he begged a couple of shirts of me.

A few days afterwards he again drew me into conversation, saying,—

"Excuse me, but I have been thinking what a pity it is that a smart, clever young gentleman like you, should go to bury himself up in the Bush, beyond Sydney there. I've been up there myself, once; but there's no life, no fun, nothing suitable—nothing go-a-head, as the Yankees say. The sea's the thing for a man of spirit."

"I thought there was very little to be done at sea, now-a-days."

"No more there is in the old jog-trot; but you have behaved very much like the gentleman, and I don't mind telling you a thing or two.

"I've been in a whaler hailing from Sydney; and it wasn't whales we made our money by, I can tell you. Why, I tell you what, it's now about five years; we'd been out four months after sperm whale, and done next to nothing. I was second mate; the first mate was a Yankee, and the captain was a native Australian. The crew were a lot of all sorts and colours. One of our best harpooners was a New Zealander, and another a half-breed from Hudson's Bay. Some prime seamen among them, but not to be trusted ashore. Well, there was a regular grumbling about our bad luck; for you see whalers are manned on the 'lay.' No wages—every man has a share in the take. I'd noticed the captain and the mate very thick, jawing together in a whisper up and down the quarter-deck; and so one day, it was a Sunday, mind, the captain slips into the cabin and soon after sends for me. There was he, with the spirit-case before him, and the mate sitting cheek by jowl. 'Take a seat,' says he, quite civil, and the mate gets up and shuts the door. 'A glass of grog? Mr. Clank; help yourself:' and with that he shoves the rum over to me, 'and don't spoil it with water.' You may believe I didn't wait

for twice asking; and it was prime stuff, surely; slipped down one's throat like new milk. 'Take another,' says he; and when he said that, I knew there was mischief up, let alone his being so civil. When I'd drawn my breath, the captain began again,—

"'Bad luck so far, Mr. Clank; we shan't have much to take home for our wives and sweethearts, at this rate.'

"'Why no,' says I, 'we couldn't have been more unlucky if we'd had a black cat or a parson aboard.'

"'And yet,' puts in the mate, 'there's better things than whales to be found in these seas sometimes for those that have the pluck to pick them up!' I could see the captain was watching me all the time.

"So I answers, rather slow, 'Well, I'm game, as long as it's follow my leader.' The captain gives a deep '*ah*,' as if he was satisfied, and turning to the mate, with a wink, says, 'Well, I think we may put her about,' and so he offered his box of Manillas to take my choice, which I took for a hint to back out.

"That night we shifted our course until we got right into the Straits of Sunda.

"One afternoon, a short time after this talk in the cabin, the mate calls to me, and puts his glass into my hand, and begs me to take a squint at something right aways on our starboard bow.

"'What do you make out?' says he.

"'John Chinaman,' says I, 'a regular Noah's ark; one, two, three, a regular fleet of junks.'

"'That's just it,' says the mate, 'these are better than sperm whales. That's the Monsoon fleet going down to buy goods at Singapore. There's a merchant in every one of those junks, with a cabin like

a parlour, a regular shop all to himself. He has his goods all nicely packed in small packages, and his money in silver ingots and dollars, in jars, ranged round like an apothecary's shop; so, as soon as it's dusk, I think we must go and do a bit of trade with the Chinaman.'

"I dropped down in a minute. You know, Sir, I would not, on any account, have done anything against Christians like ourselves; but you see, to take anything from these Pagans, with their idols and their joss-houses, was only spoiling the Egyptian—spoiling the Egyptian, Sir."

My squinting friend, who had been drinking all the time at my expense, said this with a sort of hypocritical snuffle, quite indescribable; perhaps he was afraid of going too far with me.

He continued, "We kept edging off and on till it was dark, just keeping the junk fleet in view. I had a couple of boats all ready, and some picked hands, a lot of cutlasses, and a dozen handspikes at the bottom of the boat under a sail. We said aloud we were going to have a trade with the Chinaman. The lights of the joss-houses served us to steer by; we did it as neat and comfortable as could be. The first junk, the crew were all asleep until we were on deck, though it was a heavy climb, but we had hooks for that all ready.

"The mate knew where the merchant was to be found, walked straight there, while all but three kept guard for'ard, and in less than half an hour we had all the silver and half-a-dozen bundles of silk in the boats. The second junk,—we had to quilt one fellow, though generally a dozen will run like sheep before one of our sort. Altogether, we made a very good night of it, and before morning were clean out of sight; and we played that game as

long as the season lasted. The crew were very well satisfied; we put into South American ports, and got rid of the most knowing. When we got back into Sydney, my share was better than three hundred pounds. I don't know what the captain said to the owners, but they seemed very well content to ask no questions."

"Why, good heavens!" I involuntarily and foolishly exclaimed, at the end of this rascally relation, "that was rank piracy."

"Oh no, Sir, only—not like cleaning out a square-rigged ship; those yellow pig-eyed fellows, with their pigtails, would not be believed on their oaths—only spoiling the Egyptians."

So saying he took a huge gulp at the grog. It was too dusk under the shadow of the sail for me to see the expression of his countenance, or for him to see that of mine, as he mouthed his pet phrase as if it had been an answer to everything.

Warming with the grog, and my silence, which he took for consent, he recommenced, "Why, Sir, that's nothing to what a friend of mine did to get a cargo of sandal-wood. You see, he was a master of a small schooner in the sandal-wood trade—that's a bartering trade with the South Sea Islanders, who are most of them fierce savages, and many of them cannibals. He'd sold his cargo pretty well, and went into port to lay in a stock of articles for barter, and have a spree; and spree he did to that extent, that he not only spent all his money, but when he came to be sober he found he had married a lass that he certainly would not have chosen if he had known it; a regular vixen, above five feet ten, with a colour like a rose, and a lot of fair hair that hung to her waist nearly; a real beauty; but when her back was up—and that was

about twice a day—she'd smash everything and everybody near. They called her the Countess of Mawley Pier. Well, here was a pretty concern—his money spent, and a wife on his hands that would run him in more debt in a month than he could pay off in a year. However, it was done; he could not give up the port, it was too profitable; so he thought his case over calmly, and soon made up his mind.

“He invited the Countess to go to sea for a short trip, which she was very willing to do. Before many weeks, she had given the captain a black eye and bred a mutiny. The men came aft, and insisted on her ladyship being put ashore; however, my friend managed to pacify them.

“At length they reached the Sandal Wood Island, and King Kettle came on board; an Indian king they called him, because he had made a crown of a bright copper kettle. The captain presented him with a second-hand drummer's coat, besides other valuables, and introduced him to his wife, who divided the savage's admiration with the coat; he had never seen any white woman but an old one before.

“The captain went on shore with King Kettle, and the next day, without the usual delays, the natives began bringing a cargo of sandal-wood down to the beach; they got the finest lot I ever saw; when it was loaded, King Kettle invited the captain and his lady to go ashore to a feast and dance. I will say that for her, she was afraid of nothing; the captain, before all the crew, recommended her not to go, and that makes her positive that she would. She puts on a light green satin dress with short sleeves, scarlet satin turban with an ostrich feather, all her hair hanging in curls down her

back, and a pair of pocket pistols in her belt. She looked so grand that, for all the crew were so mad with her goings on, licking them and brushing them about like dogs, they gave her three cheers when she stepped into the boat. Well, at night, the captain came back alone, and told the crew his wife would stop with the Indians, a piece of news that vexed nobody but one young fellow, who was for arming a boat, but nobody heeded him. At any rate, we up anchor and made sail, for it was a place where more than one ship's company had been murdered. Would you believe it, there are people that will have it he sold his wife to King Kettle for that cargo of sandal-wood? and when, twelve months after, news came that King Kettle, after worshipping his white wife for some time, had had his patience exhausted, like many others, and not only killed but eaten her, according to the custom of the country, the captain said, 'Well, I wonder if he digested her, be-cause,' says he, 'if he did, King Kettle's the only person she ever could agree with!'

This story quite finished me up. With a short good night and a very hollow laugh at King Kettle's digestion, I turned in, having first loaded my pistols and put them under my pillow. My dreams were not very pleasant. It would have been odd if they had been, transplanted so suddenly from the calm security of civilisation to the middle of the ocean, bound up in the space of a few square feet, certainly without a friend, and probably with a felon.

I was awakened with a fearful cry, and rushed upon deck at the same time as the captain, and saw a large ship bearing right down upon us; the man at the wheel, in his fright, threw the brig up into the wind!

"Starboard," roared the captain to the stranger

ship, snatching up a speaking trumpet. "Star-board!" we all shrieked in chorus, the shrill voice of the captain's wife above all. Through the moonlight I saw something white dash at the wheel of the stranger, and just as her bowsprit was over us she paid slowly off and past us, grinding along our stern with a sound that chilled me to my heart. We were saved. The captain's wife fell on her knees and returned thanks for our wonderful escape; most of us followed her example; but when the mate, who had been lying in a drunken sleep on deck, came up rubbing his eyes, the captain snatched up a handspike and knocked him down; the mate jumped up, and flew on him like a tiger, but the crew were too quick for him and got him down; in the meantime the captain had run for his pistols, but after a great row the mate went forward, and we all coiled down again in our berths.

A few days afterwards, the water turned bad. The owners, to save money, had given us half-cleansed beer-barrels, so it was decided to put into Rio de Janeiro. After the running-down night, the mate had been disgraced, and sent forward among the men, for it was his watch, and it seemed as if the watches in both vessels had been asleep. From that time he was never sober. He had found out the way to bore a hole in a cask of rum, and suck at it through a thin bamboo tube every evening at dusk.

I was sitting one morning reading Don Quixote, for the second time, when Clank came with a piece of wood in his hand, and asked me to lend him a large case-knife, that, among other foolish things stuck into emigrants, I had purchased for my outfit. I handed it to him without a word; he went straight to the grindstone and began to sharpen it.

"Holloa!" cried impudent little Duds, the cabin-boy, "are you going to kill a pig this morning? A bit of fresh meat would be a treat." "You shall have fresh meat enough in five minutes," was the answer. "I'm going to cut that infernal captain's liver out!"—and with that he sprang at the captain, who was just coming on deck. As luck would have it, one of the men, a sharp fellow, was coming aft, with a handspike. In an instant he threw it so cleverly, it took the mate between the legs and flung him flat; the knife flew out of his hand overboard; his head striking the captain in the middle of his fat paunch, upset him. Two or three of us jumped on top of the mate, who began to howl like a demon, and no wonder; for, in my anxiety to keep him down, I never thought of the cigar in my mouth, and all the time the crew were making a spread eagle of him, I was burning a hole in the back of his neck with the red end of it.

We made him hard and fast, for he was raving mad with *delirium tremens*. To cool him, every time the watch was called, the captain had a bucket or two of salt water thrown over him.

Four days before we reached Rio, a low, long, black schooner hailed, and asked very anxiously for news from Europe. They sent a boat aboard us, and we all fully thought we were in for a regular clearance. The officer in command, a black-bearded, neat-looking little fellow, spoke broken English with a French accent. Whether it was that they were only slavers, or that we were not worth robbing, or that they had better business on hand, after accepting a file of newspapers, and asking me especially, as I spoke French, what news from France, they were about to depart, when the officer's eyes fell upon our prisoner in chains.

With a start, and a French oath, he exclaimed, "*Tien c'est toi, Monsieur Louche, que diable fait-tu ici?*"

Then followed a whispering, which ended by the Frenchman coolly saying to the captain, "Dis is a friend of mine; I vil save you de trouble of taking him any more." With that they hurried into their boat, and in a few minutes we had seen the last of the Dominie, as a Scotch sailor had named him.

It was early daybreak when we sighted the white peak of the great Corovado mountain, the first landmark of Rio de Janeiro. With a fair wind we entered the narrow inlet of the finest harbour in the world. Precipitous rocks towered above us. On we rustled, steadily passing and answering the hail from the forts that crown the rock, and emerged into San Sebastian Bay. What a scene! never shall I forget it. An inland lake, some sixty miles in circumference, stretched before me, studded with ships of every clime. Amid the stripes and stars of the great Republic, and the tricolour of France, my heart warmed to the British union jack, beneath the broad pendant of an admiral. Hundreds of canoes, manned by negroes in scanty costume, glided swiftly over the placid waters, plying between the ships and shore; in front rose the white city of Rio de Janeiro—churches and convents, and tall warehouses, backed up by mountains, all covered with the richest tropical vegetation, save where the bare peak of Corovado rose above all. A sky of that intense blue only seen in the tropics, framed this matchless panorama. The quarantine boat, pulled by twelve negroes, in white canvas shirts without sleeves, and drawers reaching to the knee only, first reached and examined us.

On landing, we found ourselves among crowds of black boatmen, childish, submissive, and gay; Europeans, with ghastly white faces, white broad-brimmed Panama hats, white jackets, shirts, and trousers, hurrying about rapidly and earnestly, and dwarfish, languid, deliberate, tawny Brazilians.

Threading my way through a wilderness of hog-heads of sugar and bags of coffee, I entered a long street of lofty white houses with green shutters, undrained, ill-paved, and never cleaned. Before I had gone many yards, I was startled by a strange compound of sounds of rattling, singing, and groaning; from a cross street, prancing round the corner, came a hideous half-naked black; in his hand he held aloft a sort of gigantic wicker hour-glass, full of stones; shaking and waving this like a drum-major in front of his regiment, in regular time to a song, part words, part grunts, part groans, he led the way capering; fifty negroes followed in single file, some more hideous, barbarous, and unearthly than any I ever beheld; each carried on his back a huge bag of coffee, and all joined in an unearthly chorus. I stood transfixed with amazement, until they disappeared like a procession in a pantomime; surprise, disgust, horror, pity for these poor beasts of burden, overcame me. Next I encountered an enormous negress—a perfect mountain of black flesh, in a blue cotton robe, with a red and yellow cotton handkerchief round her head, garnished with large-headed gilt pins, and strings of many-coloured beads as a necklace. She carried a basket full of tempting fruit. Smiling the good-humoured smile peculiar to Africans, she invited me by signs to select something from a stock of oranges and bananas. Oh, after a sea-voyage, salt meat, and no fresh vegetables for many weeks, what a

treat it was ! The oranges, full of juice, and cold as ice, were more delicious than anything I ever before tasted ; but whether it was the appetite or the fruit that was so superior, I know not.

The fruits, the flowers, the birds, exposed for sale, were all magnificent ; but the city of Rio is much dirtier than, and very inferior to, Bordeaux, Havre, or Marseilles.

On the following day, after a very bad dinner on steaks, which it would be a libel to compare with English horseflesh, I went to the celebrated Madame Finot's for some of her feather flowers, one of the few manufactures established in Brazil. In a long lofty room, opening on a verandah, I found the mistress of the establishment, a well-dressed, coquettish Frenchwoman, seated in the midst of at least forty girls, of all ages from ten to twenty, and of all colours from jet black to the palest shades of mixed blood ; some of them extremely pretty, and all attired in very becoming costumes. Baskets full of feathers, each of some colour and shades of the richest dyes, were arranged down the centre of the room. From these their thin nimble fingers were engaged in fashioning exact representations of the most gorgeous tropical flowers, as well as roses, carnations, tulips, camellias, and all the garden favourites of Europe. Beside the basket of feathers, all around hung perches and cages, containing parrots and other birds of great value even in Brazil ; numbers flew about the room like tame pigeons, and every now and then there was a regular chase and flutter, when the little mulattoes had to pluck some feather from a living subject to finish the wreath of a queen or a princess. In a detestable country, Madame Finot's bright birds and merry girls are almost my only pleasant recollection.

The following day we sailed, and saw nothing worth noting, until a dark dim line rose on the horizon.

"Land ho!" cried the look-out. Blessed sound to the weary landsman!—a sound associated with liberty and society, a walk on turf, a dinner of fresh meat and green vegetables, clear water to drink, and something to do. The dark line was *Terra Australis*, the land of my dreams. As we approached more near, I was not greeted, as I had hoped, by sloping shores of yellow sands, or hills covered with green pasture, or clad with the bright-coloured forests of southern climes; but far above us towered an iron-bound coast, dark, desolate, barren, precipitous, against which the long rolling swell of the Pacific broke with a dull disheartening sound.

No wonder that the first discoverers, who coasted along its shores in the midst of wintry tempests, abandoned it, after little investigation, as an uninhabitable land, the dwelling-place of demons, whose voices they fancied they heard in the wailing of the wind among the inaccessible cliffs.

But soon a pilot boarded from a stout whale-boat, rowed by a dozen New Zealanders. He reached the rocks which, divided by a narrow cleft, or canal, and towering above the coast line, are the sailors' landmark, known as Sydney Heads—the cleft that Captain Cook overlooked, considering it a mere boat harbour. Steering under easy sail through this narrow channel, the scene changed, "as by stroke of an enchanter's wand," and Port Jackson lay before us, stretching for miles like a broad silent river, studded with shrub-covered islands; on either hand of the shores, the gardens and pleasure-grounds of villas and villages descended to the

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water's edge; pleasure-boats of every variety of build and size, wherries and canoes, cutters, schooners, and Mudians, glided about, gay with flags and streamers, and laden with joyous parties, zig-zagged around like a nautical masquerade. Every moment we passed some tall merchant-ship at anchor, for in this land-locked lake all the navies of the world might anchor safely.

It was Sunday evening, and the church bells clanged sweetly across the waters, mingling in harmonious discord with the distant sounds of profane music from the pleasure parties. On we sailed, until we reached the narrow peninsula where, fifty years previously, trees grew and savages dwelt, and where now stands one of the most prosperous cities in the world—there, in deep water, close along shore at Campbell's wharf, we moored. My next and the following days were devoted to exploring the city and its suburbs, and refreshing my appetite, and stretching my cramped limbs.

In the buildings there was nothing to denote a foreign city, unless it was the prevalence of green jealousies, and the extraordinary irregularity in the principal streets,—a wooden or brick cottage next to a lofty plate-glass-fronted shop in true Regent Street style. There were no beggars, and no half-starved wretches among the working-classes. In strolling early in the morning through the streets where the working-classes live, the smell and sound of meat frizzling for breakfast was almost universal.

On one of these expeditions, while strolling in the outskirts of the town, above a cloud of dust I saw approaching a huge lumbering mass, like a moving haystack, swaying from side to side, and I heard the creaking of wheels in the distance, and a

volley of strange oaths accompanied the sharp cracking of a whip; presently the horns of a pair of monstrous bullocks appeared, straining solemnly at their yokes; then another and another followed, until I counted five pairs of elephantine beasts, drawing a rude cart, composed of two high wheels, and a platform without sides, upon which was packed and piled bales of wool full fourteen feet in height. Close to the near wheel stalked the driver, a tall, broad-shouldered, sunburnt, care-worn man, with long shaggy hair falling from beneath a sugar-loaf-shaped grass hat, and a month's beard on his dusty chin, dressed in half-boots, coarse, short, fustian trousers, a red silk handkerchief round his waist, and a dark blue cotton shirt, with the sleeves rolled right up to the shoulders of his brown-red, brawny, hairy arms. In his hands he carried a whip, at least twenty feet long, with the thong of which, with perfect ease, he every now and then laid into his leaders, accompanying each stroke with a tremendous oath.

A little mean-looking man, shabbily dressed in something of the same costume, trotted humbly along on the off side. Three huge ferocious dogs were chained under the axle of the dray. This was a load of the golden fleece of Australia, and its guardians the bullock driver and bullock watchman.

The dust, the creaking of the wheels, and the ejaculations of the driver had scarcely melted away, when up dashed a party of horsemen splendidly mounted and sunburnt, but less coarse and worn in features than the bullock driver, with long beards and moustaches, and long flowing hair, some in old shooting jackets, some in coloured woollen shirts, almost all in patched fustian trousers; one, the

youngest, had a pair of white trousers, very smart, tucked into a pair of long boots—he was the dandy, I presume; some smoked short pipes; all were in the highest and most uproarious spirits. Their costume would have been dear in Holywell Street at twenty shillings, and their horses cheap at Tattersall's at one hundred pounds. These were a party of gentlemen squatters coming down, after a year or two in the Bush, to transact business and refresh in the great city of Australia.

My first step, after putting my costume in decent order, was to dive into my carpet-bag and take out a bundle of my letters of introduction, of which many displayed the admirable manner in which geography is taught in our schools. There were letters to persons residing in South Australia, Van Diemen's Land, and New Zealand—as if these had been suburbs or districts within an easy distance of Sydney, instead of as far off as Marseilles from London. Selecting one addressed to the manager of a joint-stock bank, I set out with the rest in my pocket. The gentleman received me graciously, read my letter deliberately, asked me every conceivable question about my birth, parentage, education, expectations, relatives, pursuits, and intentions, amount of capital in hand and in prospect, and ending by observing that no doubt I should find something to suit me; in the meantime, the best thing I could do was to lay out my money in shares in his bank. Luckily, I did *not* take his advice. Within twelve months the Directors drove their carriages down to the Insolvent Court, and drove back whitewashed. Having answered all his questions, I put my packet of letters into his hands and inquired their value.

“Oh,” said he, “mere sham bank notes, I sus-

pect ; however, let us sort them. In the first place, understand, young gentleman, we are divided into at least three sets, but you have only to do with two, the Free Colonists and the Emancipists. Many of the latter are wealthy, educated, and personally respectable ; but if you mean to associate with the other party, you must avoid the Emancipists (freed convicts), except in mere trade transactions, in the same way as you would a black bear in New York. If you visit one, you cannot visit the other. There are half a dozen of your letters good. I see you have the bishop and the judge, but as everybody brings letters to those gentlemen, unless you were a warm personal friend, and he was a warm personal friend of the parties addressed, you must not count on much use from them. Of this batch I know nothing ; and as to these, which are addressed to wealthy people, but quite out of the pale of society, I should recommend you to burn them."

I thanked the banker for his advice, which was all I got from him : although Australia is the most hospitable country in the world, the topping citizens of Sydney very much resemble the same gentlemen in Manchester ; they are so busy making money, that unless you have a large letter of credit they have not time to be hospitable to you ; in fact, they can't afford it. The writers of my letters had led me to expect a very different reception.

At the period I speak of—it was before the great crash of 1848—the streets of Sydney were particularly brilliant ; landaus, gigs, phaetons, curricles, and even four-in-hands, swarmed, as well as all kinds of quiet carriages, and ladies and gentlemen on horseback ; and then, as now, there were great numbers of both sexes who delighted to adorn

themselves after the exact pattern of the book of fashions; the Government clerks and the sons of wealthy Emancipists were particularly brilliant.

Amid all this glare and glitter, it is impossible to describe how lonely, how miserable I felt; ten thousand times more lonely than if in a desert, for trees are to a solitary man more soothing objects than plate glass, and cattle feeding more companionable than busy stranger crowds. However, among all my letters I found two useful, and several very civil. But it was astonishing how every one had something to sell me, an extraordinary bargain. One had a farm; another, a lot of sheep; and a third, a famous mob of cattle; and all were ready to take part cash and part on my bill at a long date. Having firmly made up my mind to buy nothing, there was no harm done; but it was amusing to find, by comparing notes, that the farm had no water, the sheep had the scab, and the cattle were so wild, that they had not been mustered within the memory of man. Even the Government clerks class cannot refrain from doing a bit of trading. These gentlemen fancy they fill the place of an aristocracy; their moustaches, tips, and patent boots, their airs and graces, would do credit to Downing Street or Somerset House. Each carries, I heard a bushman once observe, a ramrod in his spine, and an eye-glass in his eye. The sons of radical coal-merchants, transplanted to a foreign climate, become the heroes of silver-fork novels; but still the influence of the place sets them to make money as well as debts, and all my well-dressed acquaintances had something to sell me—a gun, a saddle, a fishing-rod of wonderful and totally useless perfection. When they found I would not

bite, their eyesight failed them. Still I managed to spend my time and my money pleasantly.

Sometimes I joined pic-nic parties to the oyster-beds, which lie about four miles out in the bay; sometimes I rode and drove with new-made friends in the Government domain, a splendid park, extending to the water's edge, laid out in gardens of European and tropical flowers and shrubs, with a drive for carriages, which is always crowded in an evening. There used to appear an Emancipist auctioneer, whose life and death were a romance, in a low open phaeton, drawn by four splendid ponies, ridden by postilions in livery; himself grandly leaning on a gold-headed cane. There, too, an old man of Holywell Street origin, who could neither read nor write, dashed along in a perfectly-appointed tandem, with a lovely girl beside him. He was reputed worth a hundred thousand pounds. And others of all ranks, in scores, displaying luxury without refinement; of whom, now, there are few left. There is a bathing establishment, in a retired part of the promontory on which the park is formed, and from the heights the fair Australians may often be seen, in becoming costumes, stretching across the waters of the bay with all the agility of mermaids.

A strong contrast to the belles and beaux of the park was the widow of Sam Terry the convict, who died worth a million sterling; she was pointed out to me scrubbing her own door-step one morning, in a woollen gown and shabby black silk bonnet. On another occasion, I saw Greenacre's friend, Sarah Gale, very calmly engaged in cutting up boiled beef in a cook-shop she had established.

Altogether, Sydney would be a delightful place if the men in trade could be inoculated with a few

honourable principles, and the men of leisure and wealth with a love of refined and literary occupations ; if there were a greater demand for works of history, philosophy, and poetry, for pictures and engravings, and less for port wine and French brandy.

At the end of three weeks, finding that my letters of introduction did nothing for me beyond a couple of dinners, I set about getting a situation. I was offered one at three pounds a week by a merchant, who had correspondence at Bourdeaux, and thought my French useful ; but in addition to my dislike to confinement, I found that the Sydney merchant dealt retail as well as wholesale, and expected his clerks to sell single pairs of breeches, and help customers on with their coats.

At length I met Mr. Gumscrew, a merchant, a squatter, and a swell ; he began by selling me a horse, which was indispensable in the Bush, he told me, and cheated me, and then offered to take me on one of his stations. So, heartily sick of the people and the place—in red-hot haste to get out of a colonial town life, which was too much like that I had travelled sixteen thousand miles to avoid—I agreed to his terms without bartering.

The preliminaries settled, I left my chest with a merchant and set out for my destination on horseback. I reached it after three days' riding through a wild country which has been so often described that it is not now worth describing. At Gumscrew's station, I took up my abode in a wooden hut, thatched with bark, on which well-bred short horns would have looked with contempt. The sun and moon shone clearly through the chinks between the weather boards ; my bedstead was a bullock's hide stretched over four posts driven into the ground ;

a slip of green hide, hanging between the walls, formed at once my clothes-horse and chest of drawers.

To the great contempt of my companion and fellow-lodger, I did put up a shelf for a few books, and drive in a nail for a small shaving-glass, without being able to boast a beard.

The floor was clay, variegated with holes where the broom had swept too hard. The fire-place, built of unhewn stone, formed a recess half the size of our apartment. The kitchen was detached, and, although small, rather better constructed than our chief hut, for the cook built it himself, and took pains with his special domain.

If I had been ordered into such a dog-kennel in England, I should have grumbled and devoured my heart with vain complainings; but now it was my own choice, I had hopes before me, chinks and cracks were of no consequence, and, when inclined to grumble, I looked back on the dark lawyer's den in which I had spent the last six months of my life in England. After a few days spent in cantering round the neighbourhood, I was ready to commence my light duties.

These light duties consisted in helping to milk; making butter; riding round to men at work in the Bush felling timber, with a packhorse loaded with flour and tea; and other duties, including the care of stores, which we should call menial in England. My poetical ideas of the Bush were soon dispersed, and I learned that sentiment, refinement, and romance are luxuries seldom to be enjoyed at a distance from civilised—very rarely in the midst of a population like that of Australian—towns.

After all the fine things that have been written about Bush enjoyment, I have come to the conclu-

sion that they consist to one set of men in the contrast between past misery and present independence, and to another in the excitement of rising with the tide of colonial prosperity, instead of sinking under the competition of a crowded community.

The following "Squatter's Song," from a satirical Sydney paper, may be considered a picture of the other extreme:—

THE BUSHMAN TO HIS BRIDE.

The gum has no shade,
And the wattle no fruit;
The parrot don't warble
In notes like the flute;
The cockatoo cooeth
Not much like a dove:
Then come let us ride
To my station, my love!
Four hundred miles off
Is the length of our way;
It is done in a week
At but sixty a day.
The plains are all dusty,
The creeks are all dried;
'T is the fairest of weather
To bring home my bride.
The whizzing musquito
Shall dance o'er thy head,
And the guana shall squat
At the foot of thy bed.
The brave laughing jackass
Shall sing thee to sleep,
And a snake o'er thy slumbers
His vigils shall keep.
Then sleep, lady, sleep,
Without dreaming of pain;
Till the frost of the morning
Shall wake thee again.
Our brave bridal bower
I build not of stones;
Though, like old Doubting Castle,
'T is paved with bones—

The bones of the sheep,
On whose flesh I have fed—
Where thy trim satin slipper
Unshrinking may tread:
For the dogs have all polished
Them clean with their teeth;
And they're better, believe me,
Than what lies beneath.

* * * *

My door has no hinge,
And the window no pane;
So they let out the smoke,
Though they let in the rain!
The frying-pan serves us
For table and dish,
And the tin pot of tea stands
Filled full at your wish.
Though the sugar is brown,
And the milk is all done,
Still tea and brown sugar
Are better than none.
Then fear not, fair lady,
The desolate way;
Your clothes will arrive
In three months with my dray.
Though the stockmen will swear,
And the shepherds won't sing,
A good dog's a companion
Enough for a king.
Then mount, lady, mount,
To the wilderness fly;
My stores are laid in,
And my shearing is nigh;
And our steeds that through Sydney
Exultingly wheel,
Must graze in a week
On the banks of the Peel.

CHAPTER III.

HUNTING A WILD HORSE.

AFTER awhile I began to make acquaintance with my neighbours, amongst whom I found many young fellows of my own age, some natives of the colony, and others who had wandered out with more or less capital, either intent on making a fortune, or satisfied, after having spent one, to live at peace out of the reach of discounters, duns, bailiffs, angry fathers, drunken wives, false sweethearts, and rascally executors. In my time love, debt, drink, the stock exchange, the racecourse, and the Court of Chancery, all sent representatives of their dupes and their victims; since that time, the number and the variety have been increased by a larger share of the purely adventurous.

Among the friends that I look back to now with pleasure were the three Dawoods, Robert, Charley, and John, sons of a Yorkshire farmer, who emigrated when half ruined by believing in the possibility of keeping up war prices, and Philip Paginton, a long Devonian, who, according to hints and scraps, and bits of unwilling conversation, was the son of a large-acred squire, and heir not remotely to a title, who had lived among the best of the land, and enjoyed the half of a University education, until a mysterious black cloud had wafted him off to be my neighbour as the nominal manager of a large station (with the help of a shrewd Colonial who could neither read nor write) which was the property of an Australian bank. He had plenty of money and a magnificent

outfit, rode capital horses, and told wonderful sporting stories, but was subject to fits of absence. Sometimes we set him down for a murderer, or a man who had killed his best friend in a duel; at others, for an illegitimate sprig of the highest rank; and once there was a circumstantial rumour that he had married a lovely creature of eight-and-twenty, whom he believed to be, as she told him, a princess of the house of Bourbon, living *incog.* in the chaste neighbourhood of Cleveland Square, but who was unfortunately recognised by his fast uncle, an ex-captain of lancers, as Mademoiselle Eugenie Tapa-geuse, artiste and Lorette,—well known in Paris, Brussels, and Baden-Baden—a month after the secret marriage, and three days after she had presented him to the three lovely children of her sister, one black, one fair-haired, and one red-haired, who all called her mamma.

But that is a long story, and we did not make the truth out until we had often done poor Paginton injustice.

One morning, when I was busy in the dairy skimming cream, and planning how, when I had a dairy of my own, whiter and smaller fingers than mine should pat the butter, a series of cracks from stock-whips, like the report of a platoon of pocket pistols, disturbed my innocent occupation, and dispersed my dreams of a model dairy and dairy-maid—out I dashed, in my shirt sleeves, skimmer in hand, a red bandana tied round my head, and saw, galloping up, the Dawcods and Paginton, all working away like so many lunatic French postilions. In an instant they were at the door.

They were full of something, but said nothing until they had had a smoke and a drink of tea, and then by degrees let out that news had reached them

from Sydney. My employer had made a total smash, so my occupation was gone. They were on the point of making an overland journey to the Port Phillip district with stock ; would I join them, share the risk and the profits ? Half an hour was enough to make up my mind. In a week we started, and it was while bushing at night by a wood fire that we got into the way of telling yarns, some of which will be reproduced in these pages. I could fill a volume with the details of our overland journey, but all that has been done too often lately to be amusing now. We sold our stock well, and it was before returning, while on our expedition in Gipp's Land, to see a relation of the Dawoods, that we met with an adventure which could only have happened in a newly-settled district.

Our host, old Robin Bland, had been a skipper, and settled down with a Colonial wife in the wild Gipp's Land. He greeted us with, " Eh, lads, but ye're welcome with your bonny nags. There's a vast of wild cattle and horses in these hills, worth your riding after, if ye could drive them. There's a black stallion, a rogue with a mob of well-bred mares he has coaxed off from one or other of our stations. The deevil would be worth a hundred gouden guineas if ye could lay hond on him. He comes down to the pool below to drink pretty oft, but none of our chaps can tackle him."

We made up our minds to have a shy at the stallion, and after spelling a week to rest our horses, set off one morning, just before daybreak.


Robert Dawood took the command of the party. Tall, fair-haired, with his long silky mustachios and auburn beard flowing over his bronzed chest, and large blue eyes restlessly glancing from side to side, he looked like some Saxon sea-king rather than a

peaceful herdsman,—if sea-kings ever rode thorough-breds in blue jerseys, cabbage-tree hats, and fustians tucked into Wellington boots.

Paginton was dark as a gipsy, with a flushed colour, and one of the tallest men and best horsemen for his length I ever saw. He was mounted on a half-bred gray Arab, that seemed dwarfed under him into a pony, but could carry him faster and further than anything in the colony.

Charley, little random rollicking Charley, rode a weedy, vicious brute, of Lawson's brown-muzzled breed, with a loose rein, up and down hill, in a style perfectly wonderful. The wretch was as fond of cattle or horse-hunting as his master, but at other times was always kicking, bucking, biting, and playing the devil, to the annoyance of every one except Charley. John was on a piebald stock-horse, an ugly brute, but perfect for mountain work. Both John and Charley were true specimens of native Australians—good-tempered, hospitable, generous, ready to ride anything or fight any one, game to the backbone, very ignorant, in spite of their father's care and their brother's example; they could scarcely and never did read, except when I lent them *Sporting Magazines* or *Bell's Life*, and then I caught them listening to Charley the Swell, the ticket-of-leave shepherd, reading for them. Their desires were bounded by a good run, a large head of stock, and some famous mares, which were to be their portion as soon as old Dawood could spare them; and their conversation turned chiefly on the merits of their nags, races, and cock-fights.

Our way lay for full seven miles over rolling plains thinly dotted with trees, where the herbage rose to our horses' knees; then came forests of green trees, and then again the ground opened until it became



clear as far as we could see, an ocean of grass land with islands of scrubby thickets.

Birds were more rare than in the shady, leaf-covered woods of Europe, and for miles few living things crossed our path. From time to time large flocks of cockatoos screamed horribly at us as we approached the bare-looking lofty gum-trees on which they clustered, and millions of insects in the air and on the grass hummed in concert like the murmuring of a living sea; all comparatively new and strange to me, as I rode on with kindling imagination in the excitement of expectation. I did not then feel the monotony of the Australian desert that has since so often wearied me, and made me long for the less genial but more varied climate of hard-working England.

At one moment a mob of kangaroos leaped across our path; at another, two emus, surprised drinking at a water-hole, thundered away, shaking the dry ground with their hard feet; but we had with intention left our dogs behind, and turned neither to the right nor left.

When for the second time quitting a forest, Paginton, whose quick accustomed eyes had detected something unusual in a low bush, called to me, and cantered towards it cracking his whip, when up rose a bird as big as a barn-door cock, slowly spreading a pair of monstrous wings, and holding something as large as a rabbit in his talons. Frightened by our shouts, he dropped at our feet what proved to be a black flying squirrel, warm and bleeding, but dead.

The skin of this bird-baste, as my Irish shepherd used to call the animal, formed the first trophy of our day's sport.

From time to time we passed great herds of cattle

feeding in detached lots under the shade of the green trees, or marching down in single file to the springs that abound in these flats; the cows, calves, and bullocks going first, and a bull, the head, protector, and patron of the mob, bringing up the rear, pausing momentarily, and hoarsely bellowing as our cavalcade came in sight.

At length we reached the scene of our intended hunt, and the appearance of the ground was anything but inviting for a helter-skelter gallop. I confess that, without the example of my companions, and the knowledge that my horse, having been bred on the mountains, was to the manner born, I should never have dreamed of riding beyond a foot pace.

Along the lower face of this range, taking advantage of the cattle-paths and watercourses, it was our plan to press the wild horses so hard that they could not retire to high rocky plateaux above, but must descend to their other feeding-ground on the plains, where we hoped to run them down.

Our search commenced in a heavily-timbered flat which gradually sloped down to a running stream swollen with recent rains, beyond which, in a succession of rocky ridges, rose a range of mountains, with stony inaccessible peaks, where the winter snow long rests, the sides by turns bare and dark with forest and matted brush, divided by deep ravines, carved out by floods. It was at a spring in this flat that Long Peter, while cutting out some wild honey with a black, had caught sight of the wild horses.

It had been arranged that Charley, whose nag was a fast but not a lasting one, should take up the running as soon as he came in sight of our prey, and keep as close to the best horse—the black stallion, if possible—as he could. John was to follow, keeping Charley just in sight, and pushing to the right

or left as occasion might require. Robert and Philip were to take up the running as soon as the first two were blown, and I was to act under their orders. Three distinct cracks of a whip were to be a signal for pushing on, while the same signal was to be continually repeated when the thicket closed the view, in order that we might follow the right track. "And mind, Barnard," said Robert to me, "keep sight of us, but don't press your horse in going over difficult ground, trust all to him; and if you get lost, give him his head and he will take you to some stockman's hut, as he knows every one on these mountains; and now look to your girths and take up your stirrups two holes, for if we find here we shall have to ride like the devil."

Having thus prepared, we spread in a half circle, and paced slowly through the forest with our eyes on the ground. Huge trunks of fallen trees in various stages of decay, and deep pits, where the roots had been torn up, crossed our path in every direction. But my horse twisted by or leaped over these obstacles, with a perfection of instinct that left me nothing to do but preserve my seat and keep a look-out worthy of my apprenticeship as a Bushman.

Half an hour had elapsed and no signs of anything, when a low whistle from Philip brought us to a halt. We pressed towards him. He had dismounted, and pointed to the fresh tracks of several unshod horses, among which that of a foal was visible. With signs he bade us follow, and marched on foot, leading his horse, with his eyes on the ground, noting every sign. At some richer herbage he stopped, passed his hand over it, and gathered up a tuft of grass. "They are close by," he whispered; "this is fresh cropped, and damp from a horse's mouth."

"Mount, then," said Dawood, "they will be drinking at the Black Swan water-hole; give them a few minutes to fill themselves, and then, Charley, don't spare your old horse, the black is worth a hundred of him. Let's make a circuit beyond Paddy Ryan's Pool, and then ride up the bed of the creek."

Charley nodded without answering, for he was just letting out his girths a hole, thinking he had hauled them too tight. For my part I was red and pale by turns; my teeth chattered as they used to do by the side of the gorse cover, "When old Wanderer gave tongue and Melody echoed him," not for fear, but for pleasure, for I thought of my days on the Yorkshire hills and vales with —— and ——; it was only the fallen gum-trees that made the difference.

With that we started, reached the running water, slid into it at one of the cattle runs, and rode up, splash, splash, in Indian file. There had been a good deal of rain the week before, and the snow had melted on the top of the mountain range, so that the stream, which since I have seen scarcely sufficient to chain the water-holes with a thin thread, rose to our horses' bellies, and rattled past, drowning the sound of our cavalcade. We pushed on in this order, with ducks, cranes, and swans rising before us, until, rounding a miniature promontory, our leader halted and held up his hand. Looking through a clump of bush, we could see the black stallion standing up to his knees in a pool, drinking, snorting, and pawing the water into a foam—a splendid picture of beauty and strength. As he was turned from us, we could just see his small ears peeping above a mane that descended on both sides his massive arching neck down to his knees, as from time to time he shook it, and played with two mares,

a grey and a chestnut, which drank and meekly admired their lord from a little distance, while another black mare moved slowly up a cattle-path towards the mountains with a yearling colt trotting at her heels. Charley had to get clear from the spreading branches of a fallen tree before he could be seen. The stallion looked up as a bough cracked loudly, and Charley's horse appeared within twenty yards; then, turning, he stared for a moment with his fierce, fiery eyes through his damp, hanging locks, and, with a shrill neigh of warning that re-echoed from the mountains like the voices of a hundred steeds, sprang, at one lion-like bound, from the pool to the bank, and dashed up the breast of a precipitous mountain track, followed by the black mare, the others flying in an opposite direction. At the same moment Charley's spurs were dashed into his horse's sides, his head turned up a shorter and easier exit from the stream, and, quick as thought, he was at speed, thundering and rolling down gravel and stones upon us. More leisurely, we followed; the hunted and the hunter disappeared behind the first hill, to reappear almost immediately on a narrow path worn by wild cattle along the mountain side—a glorious, frightful sight. But we neither saw nor felt any danger.

“Hold hard, and sit back, Armorer,” was all I heard from Robert, as we rushed away, our eyes fixed on the flying stallion. Scarcely did I notice then the broken chasms, the huge boulders, the narrow crumbling rocks, over which, goat-like, my horse made his way. Mad with excitement, on we bounded, where a stumble would have been instant death. At length, at a wave of the hand from Robert, turning to a more circuitous and safer path, I lost sight of my companions; and, pulling on my

horse at a slow trot, I crowned the heights and came upon a long, level, narrow green gorge of galloping ground, where I rejoined Paginton and Robert, and could see Charley and John just disappearing round a bend. Pressing on steadily over turf level as a bowling-green, no doubt the bed of some primæval watercourse, we again caught sight of the stallion, Charley's mare at his quarters, seemingly almost within reach of the glorious beast. Presently the gorge began to close up; a solid wall of rock higher than a cathedral tower loomed before us. "Hurrah, hurrah!" I shouted, "he's pounded."

"Hold your tongue," cried Robert, "you'll need breath before night. There is a road to the bottom that will make us sweat before we've done." And so on, on we strode, the green grass flying under us, enveloped in a cloud of misty rain, leaving the bright hot sun below and behind. Presently we saw the dark shadow of a horse and horseman appear for an instant on a crag above us, as he emerged from a narrow defile which, under the wall of solid rock, wound from the gorge along which we had been racing. The mare, which had a good start, must have passed to the right, as we saw no more of her this time. As we turned into the defile, the smooth ground ceased, like a lake of rock-bound shores, and we rattled over a mere sheep track against the breast of the mountain. We saw the stallion disappearing far above us over the crest of the mountain, and could hear Charley's signal of distress. Philip pushed on, crying, "Save your horse, Armorer, till you get to good ground;" and in a few minutes I was alone, but soon overtook Charley, whose horse had fallen at a tree, and did not seem much inclined to get up again. He waved his whip, and I trotted slowly on, doubting if I

should ever see any more of the stallion or the party.

At length I reached the top, and, hearing a cooing, I made towards a cattle-track, and found Robert waiting for me.

"I see," said he, "that the black horse will make for the flats below; at the next turn we can see for miles, so you will be sure to hit him off, if your Wallaby's wind will hold out, and Paginton does not manage him before he gets down, which I don't think he will without your help."

This speech gave me new heart. Gathering myself up, I took a pull at my little horse, touched him with the spur, and found him strong and full of pace. His big deep chest had carried him up the steep hills, and my eight stone was but a feather on his broad and powerful quarters. Straining my eyes to catch the first glimpses of an open view through the thick scrub that hung over the winding defile, I remember now seeing two huge rock kangaroos go bounding down the mountain side; but, new and strange as such game then was to me, I neither turned nor paused to listen to the re-echoing stamps with which they crashed along. At length we crowned the crest of the dividing range, and paused for a moment before descending the steep gulf that offered the only path downwards. Robert pointed to a vast open plain, that rolled like a map from the edge of the forest-covered declivity at our feet. From below rose through the silent air, from time to time, the distant reports of the stock-whips, re-echoing from the basalt rocks louder and louder and then dying away.

These sounds, and the sight of the boundless plain, half maddened me. I dashed down the steep water-course, my horse bounding like a deer from boulder

to boulder. "On, on," I cried, "Rob." "Steady, steady," shouted my Australian friend, in a clear calm voice of command, "or you'll kill your horse, if you don't break your own neck. We are sure of him now, if you'll only save your impatience up a little longer. Pull up, Barnard, this moment, and follow me." There was no disobeying common sense and command united. He then took the lead, and, leaning back on the saddle until my head nearly touched the horse's counter, leaving the reins loose, leaping standing, now walking, now gently trotting, and then twisting and twirling among brushwood, timber trees, and fallen rocks, and again, as we came on a practicable bit of smooth ground, cantering, I followed the best bushman in the colony, rejoicing that my long legs, light weight, and early practice in mountain hunting, enabled me to hold my own in this grand and novel sport.

Robert's consummate bushmanship led him the true course, even when we were going fastest; every cattle-track was familiar to him; and bits of stone and grass and broken twigs, which I should have passed unregarded, were to him plain proofs of where the black stallion or his daring pursuers had passed.

At length we cleared the broken path, and, from a sort of green plateau, caught another glimpse of the plain below and the open forest growing against the steep hill side.

"Now," said Robert, "you can't miss your way; keep to the left a little, I'll to the right, and we shall have him between us, for Phil and John must be beat by this time. Your path is short and easy, give your horse a moment to wind, and then don't spare him. So saying, with a shout and a wave of his whip, he turned sharp to the right, and dashed

down towards the plain. His calmness now changed to an eagerness equal to my own. For a moment I was startled at being left alone in these great woods; I paused to listen as the dry wood sharply snapped and broke under his horse's feet, and the stones, dislodged by his gallop, rolled sounding down below the precipice, alongside of which he took his daring course; then awakening, I gave my nag his head, and started once more. Before I had cantered a hundred yards, Wallaby turned sharply, pushed through some thick brushwood, tearing one leg of my trowsers to tatters, and came upon a cattle-track which soon brought me to a road of Nature's making, that saved all further doubt and anxiety as to my course; for some pent-up torrent of winter snows, or some landslip in past ages, had cleared away a broad green path, smooth shaven as if by a Titan's spade, down which, rapidly galloping, I soon reached a belt of forest that divided me from the plain; through these my horse, leaping and winding along, brought me on the glorious grassy desert just in time to see, in the horizon, Philip and John waving their hats to Robert, who, about a quarter of a mile on my right, was taking up the running.

"Hurrah, hurrah!"

"Yoicks, tallyho! hark forward, away!" Standing up in my stirrups, my eyes fixed on the speck which instinct told me was our chase, holding my horse to a measured stride, I bounded along over sward that scarcely sounded under my horse's hoofs. The sun was high and hot now, but I did not feel it. Hunger, and thirst, and weariness, all were forgotten. The pure delicious atmosphere, the sweet perfume of wild flowers, the pleasure of swift motion, the boundless plain unrolled before me, the triumph of ap-

proaching success, filled heart and brain with delicious maddening excitement. Oh, happy joyous days! Oh, glorious pleasures of my youth, when the night brought calm rest, and the morrow no regret! what can wealth, what can cities offer that can equal you!

Very soon the black stallion came in view nearer, nearer; he still made a good fight, and struggled on bravely, but at three-quarters speed, I gained on him at every stride. Now sure of my prey, I gave way to my pent-up feelings; I screamed, and shouted, and waved my cap as though I had been cheering on a pack of hounds running in view.

Leaping over cracks and fallen logs, stumbling over wombat holes, on we raced. Robin to the right, carefully holding his horse, which was beginning to flag under the rider's weight and the last burst down the mountain side.

At length, nearer and nearer we came, near enough to distinguish every movement of the black. His proud head carried low, he still reeled along with desperate strides. Oh, how changed from the lion-like bounds of the morning! his late glossy coat and flowing mane grey with sweat and foam.

Robin, sparing neither whip nor spur, was seeking to weary him out by heading him again and again; but his own steed was done, and he beckoned me on just as the good chestnut stumbled, and without a struggle rolled over like a log. "All right," cried he, standing over his beaten horse, bridle in hand, as I turned towards him, "push on, Barnard, now's your time!" It was no moment for civilities, so I left him—a strange spectacle; his face, hair, and beard black, streaked with sweat, dust, and blood from scratches of the thicket; his woollen shirt, torn

open, displayed his brawny chest, but his air, as ever, full of strength and self-confidence.

In five minutes I found I could ride round the wild horse, so I pressed on him constantly; at every wave of my whip, he doubled like a beaten hare, but showed his teeth when I headed him, and glared with fiery eyes that showed it would not be safe to come to close quarters. Thus pressing and doubling, we carried on for some miles over ground as level as the Wiltshire Downs, until the stallion's pace fell to a trot, and at times a walk; but still, whenever I neared him, he showed dangerous fight. While doubting how to end the conflict, and thinking that an unlucky stumble might make me lose all our labour, I saw something looming in the distance, which proved to be a lot of tame stock-horses driven by a boy towards a neighbouring station. The boy, a true Cornstalk, saw how the game stood, pushed on to join me, and together, one on each side, we dashed shouting and lashing at the stallion. His tail shivering, his sides heaving, he vainly tried to escape a fresh horse and rider; wherever he bounded we followed, and, before he knew where he was, had him enveloped in the mob of tame ones. This done, I shouted "Victory!"—young Cornstalk, something more homely and energetic; and then, flogging, hallooing, hurrying, trampling in a cloud of dust, we drove the lot pell-mell into a stock-yard. The slip-rails were closed in an instant, and the black stallion, after one fierce despairing leap at the lofty paling, sank exhausted to the ground.

When the mob of tame horses, with our chase in the middle of them, rushed trampling into the stock-yard, I slipped off my nag and ran to help the young stockman to close the entrance, and then, after giving one more who-whoop of triumph, I leaned

my hot head against the bars of the stock-yard, and, drawing a long breath, began to peer through the clouds of dust at my captive. The tame ones had drawn round him snorting in a half circle; he lay half on his knees, just where the strong top-rail had flung him back, exhausted, raging, breathing hard through his thin red nostrils, and throwing up his head with grinning teeth, whenever the others moved towards him.


With a sort of calm, dreamy, languid feeling I stood, I know not how long, surveying him, until the young stockman touched me on the shoulder.

"I think, master, you'd better leave him now to sulk a bit; I'll come presently and give him some water and oaten hay, but now you may as well put your nag to feed in our little paddock, have a wash at the creek, and come up to the hut, for I fancy you've had nearly enough for to-day, and mother will be rare glad to see you; she loves to see any one from old England."

I started out of my dreams at these words of welcome, and, turning round, saw that the evening was closing in. Wallaby, recovering from the last burst, was whinnying at my elbow, searching in vain for a tuft of grass on the bare ground.

"With all my heart," I answered, "for my mouth and throat are like a furnace, and my face feels masqued with dust and sweat. But tell me how you knew I was lately from England?"

"Oh!" answered the young centaur, as he half jumped, half clambered on his long-tailed colt, "I knew by the red colour in your face, and your double bridle, and your dandy boots, that you must be the young swell that Bald-faced Dick told us, when he came up with the dray, was stopping at Robin Bland's, learning the colonial touches."



With this explanation, my companion, a lathy lad of thirteen, with straw-coloured elf-locks, hanging from under a battered straw hat round a brown-burned fair-complexioned face, blue, dare-devil eyes, and merry mouth full of white teeth, kicked his half-broken brute with his one spur, and set off towards a water-hole in sight, at a singular pace, between bucking, kicking, and cantering, sitting all the time as close and as calmly as if he had been riding a rocking-horse. I followed, leading Wallaby, and we all indulged in a delicious bathe and drink at the same time. In Europe, this sort of imprudence ought to have killed both horse and man, but the sun had taken the chill off the water before we went into it.

After thus refreshing, Bill Donovan, or Spider Legs—his two names, the latter being the more current, as he informed me—turned Wallaby into a small paddock, proposing to let him feed there for an hour or two before hobbling him out, and then, pointing to the hut which stood on a hillock beside the creek, within a gunshot of where I had been bathing, he left me, to feed his own horses and give some water to the black stallion, as well as to get him into a smaller stock-yard by himself. The mob of horses which had so much assisted me had been driven up to mount a party about to drive some cattle down the country.

Carrying my saddle on my head, I walked up towards the hut. It was a long, low building of slabs, like a wooden barn, with a sharply peaked roof, extending on both sides forward, so as to form a large verandah, supported by uncarved stumps; creepers, green, red, and purple, almost covered the colour of the wood in front; at the back it was shaded by three large trees, growing on the spur of

a rocky range which pushed in upon and bounded the plain. On one side, under the shade of one of the trees, was a dairy, half sunk in the ground; and next to it, carefully fenced in, with rails wattled, a garden; and I could hear some calves mooing behind the house, in a yard where their dams were being milked. Poultry and ducks were luxuriating over a few curds thrown outside the dairy; a sow, with a litter of half-grown piglings, was making her way from the bed of the creek to join the repast; a shepherd-bitch and her half-dozen pups, with three or four kangaroo dogs, rushed out, fiercely barking at me, but were driven back by two fat, sun-burnt, bare-footed little children, with miniature stock-whips, dressed in little shirts and nothing else. The noise of the dogs, and the shrill scoldings of the children, brought out the mother and mistress of the station from the far end of the verandah—a rosy sonsy dame, of good old English stuff—her bare arms covered with soap-suds, for I had caught her in the middle of a grand wash, followed by two little girls, her partners in the domestic business, who hung behind her skirts, peeping out at the stranger with curious rolling hazel eyes, like frightened hares, while an elder graceful beauty, of the delicate Australian type, came out of the dairy with her assistant, a squat, red-headed Irishwoman.

“Come, children, don’t be frightened; this gentleman’s from England, I am sure.”

With that they all came crowding round me; their shyness vanished; I was in a moment an old friend. I sat down with the good woman on a bench in the verandah;—the little ones took hold of my hands and clambered on my knees;—the elder ones stood apart, gazing on me with curious friendly faces;—my heart beat thick—my eyes filled with

tears. These kind voices were the first echoes of the homes of my native land that had fallen on my ears since I had been in the colony. It is only after suffering much and travelling far that we learn the magic of a friendly familiar voice in a distant land—even the twang of the provincial dialect sounded sweet upon my ears, and in the accent of the good mother I recognised the county where I had passed my childhood;—a few words explained that we knew the same people and the same places, although we had never met before.

My hostess had a thousand questions to ask, which she poured forth in breathless haste, scarcely waiting for answers—about a noble family under whom she and her forefathers had lived long;—about names, some known, many unknown to me;—about children whom she had dandled in her arms, forgetting that they were now men;—about the big oak, the glory of the Park—and the thickets of fern where the fawns lay. She told me how pleased she was when a child to hold the gate open for the scarlet-coated horsemen as they came trooping in to the Moor-House Meets. She asked me if I remembered her, forgetting that she must have left England while I was quite a child. I answered as well as I could, until at length, perhaps a little out of breath, the good woman suddenly remembered her hospitable duties, and, stopping short in the midst of an inquiry about the Princess Victoria, exclaimed,

“But, Lord forgive me, dear young gentleman, all this time you must be tired to death and famished, while I am talking my nonsense; come inside, pray, and sit down. Patsy, you little villain, go and catch one of the white pullets this minute; you catch them fast enough when they are not wanted. Jane, get done with the dairy; and Dora,

never mind the washing; see how the fire is in the kitchen, and get the pots on for tea. Oh, sir, they live most of 'em like pigs in this country;—no garden—no cream—no nothing, but salt beef and damper; but I do like things comfortable, so does my good man. You shall have as good a bit of supper as you could have at the Moor Arms."

"Nay," said I, "pray make no fuss for me; give me a drink of milk or cold tea, and I will rest until some of my companions come up, so we will all sup together."

The good woman would have debated the point a little, but a battle royal among the pigs and children, in which her washing was likely to suffer, called her off in a hurry. One of the little girls soon came, bringing me a bowl of delicious milk. As my eyes became accustomed to the darkness of the long room, the shutters of which had been closed for coolness, I espied in one corner a sort of couch of oaten hay, covered with kangaroo-skins. Sun-blistered, parched, bruised, and weary, yet glowing with that pleasing languor which usually follows the hot excitement of a long, sharp, successful chase, I threw myself upon this bush ottoman, determined not to sleep, but wait the arrival of my friends, as I felt sure that Robert and Phil, and probably Charley, if not John, would make for this station before night.

The room, lately empty, was almost full. Rob Dawood and Paginton were standing over me; a table of boards laid on trestles was covered with a white cloth. A strong smell of hot meat and vegetables pervaded the apartment. The two little girls were coming in from the detached kitchen, one with a dish of potatoes, and the other with vegetable marrows and cucumbers. A huge pie (of parrots it turned out to be) was on the table; my late assist-

ant, Spider Legs, and a younger brother, brought in large dishes of fried mutton and fried pork; half a dozen young ones followed, rejoicing over such an unusual feast. Then came my host, a handsome, soldier-like looking Irishman, of some fifty years of age, carrying an armful of quart pots full of tea; my hostess followed, with a very red face, some monstrous dampers, and a bowl of milk. Besides all this there were eggs, pots of the black wild honey, and some tame too of purest yellow, bushels of peaches, water-melons, and other dainties too numerous to describe. I rubbed my eyes, not quite sure whether I was dreaming now or not.

Little Patsy, the rising scholar of the family, asked a blessing, and, pulling out our pocket-knives, to work we set with famous appetites, in a manner that would have sent any silver-forkian into fits, unless he had had a bush ride to prepare him for the spectacle.

How we polished off mutton and pork, fried onions, fresh-water cod, parrot pie, honey, peaches, cucumbers, melons, damper, butter, and cheese, was, as the Yankees would say, a caution. I never was a good hand at describing eating, and should not have remembered this, if it had not been the first repast that gave me a notion how comfortable people could be in the bush if they tried, and also an era in my life, as the close of my first day of bush horsemanship. Supper finished, in which, by the by, besides ten of the twelve children of our host, two travellers joined, we adjourned to the verandah to smoke our pipes by the light of the moon.

Charley came in soon after supper, having got his horse again going after some hours' rest, but John never showed; and we felt assured, as it afterwards turned out, that he had camped on the mountains.

At length we retired to rest, in a room papered over with newspapers, and adorned with some remarkably gay portraits of St. Patrick, the King, Queen, and other notabilities, as well as a kangaroo hunt, in charcoal, performed by the genius of the family, in a style that left which was the kangaroo and which the dogs a matter of some doubt.

I shall not spin out this adventure by telling how we tamed the black stallion, and drove in both mares and cattle, and made a good profit by the transaction. It is enough to say that this journey rubbed off all the remains of my *new chummery*: from that time I was received as a "Bushman," and, not long afterwards, I became myself partner in a cattle station.

CHAPTER IV.

A PRISONER'S STORY.

WHEN I returned from our visit to Gipp's Land I agreed to settle down for a term with an old neighbour of Dawood's, who had a farm with a good deal of arable land, as well as a station on the ranges, that I might learn something of agriculture as well as stock. It was before gold-digging had given a value to wheat-land. There I met with a man whose story is worth telling.

Returning home one evening, I stopped my horse to look at our ploughman breaking up a fine piece of alluvial flat, which had recently been cleared and fenced in. He had ten pair of oxen and a heavy swing plough at work. There was a man to help him to drive, but his voice was as good as his hands, and it was a pleasure to see him—as he turned up a broad furrow of virgin soil—halt his team, and lift the big plough over the roots of the stumps that dotted the paddock as if it had been a feather-weight. Our ploughman, Jem Carden—Big Jem, he was commonly called—was a specimen of English peasantry, such as we don't often see in Australia, tall, though a round-shouldered stoop took off something from his height, large-limbed but active, with a curly, fair-haired bullet head, light-blue good-natured eyes, and hooked nose, large mouth full of good teeth, a solid chin, a colour which hard work and Australian sun could not extract, and an expression of respectful melancholy

good-nature that at once prepossessed me in his favour. He was then in the prime of life, a perfect master of every kind of rural work—ploughing, sowing, reaping, mowing, thatching, breaking-in and driving bullocks and horses, and not less an adept in all colonial pursuits, for he could do as much with a saw, an auger, an axe, and an adze as a European workman with a complete chest of tools. He was a very good fellow, too, always ready to help any one at a pinch: when the stockman broke his leg, he walked twenty miles through the rain—a tropical rain in bucketfuls—although they had fought the day before about a dog of Jem's the stockman had been ill-using; and yet Big Jem was a convict, or, speaking colonially, "a prisoner."

I felt anxious to know more about this man, but I had no opportunity of satisfying my curiosity until I happened to go up the country for a lot of cattle, and chose Big Jem to help me.

We got our horses into the paddock close to the hut overnight; the next morning, at sunrise, I buckled a blanket, a couple of shirts, a bag of tea and sugar, a quart pot, and a pair of hobbles to my saddle, and started in high spirits.

Now, living in the Bush, and especially while travelling, there is not the same distance between a master and well-behaved man, although a prisoner, as in towns. From the first I was interested in the ploughman, so I treated him on the journey with special kindness.

We travelled all day, from sunrise to sundown, seldom going off a walk, at which pace our horses could do nearly five miles an hour; towards evening we tried to strike some station or shepherd's hut, the whereabouts of which Jem generally knew by the mixture of experience and instinct that constitute a

perfect Bushman. If we could not light upon a hut, we camped down near a water-hole, lighted a fire in some hollow fallen gum-tree, hobbled out our horses on the pasture near, put the quart pots to boil, the damper (flour cake) in the ashes to bake, and smoked our pipes until all was ready; then, rolling up each in his blanket, slept soundly on the bare ground.

I think it was on the third day that we came upon a long stretch of open undulating country, where the grass scarcely gave back a sound to our horses' feet. I dropped the reins on my little mare's neck and began to fill my pipe; but seeing Carden's pipe still stuck in his straw hat, I knew he must be bankrupt in a Bushman's greatest luxury, so handed him my pouch, and said, "Come, ride alongside me, and tell me how you came here; for I cannot imagine how so honest a fellow ever got into trouble."

"Master," he answered, "I'll tell you all the truth; but give me a little time, for my heart's full, and it will take us a good three hours to get across these plains." So we paced on in silence for the space of one pipe, when he spoke again, and said, "Master, excuse me, but I'm not much of a scholar, and if you would read me a chapter from this book, it would do me a power o' good. I try sometimes myself to spell it out, but somehow I can't see the letters 'plain.'" His eyes were full of tears as he timidly handed me a black clasped copy of the Bible.

There was something painful in the emotion and humbleness of a strong man before me, a stripling, alone with him in a desert.


I took the book from him; on the fly leaf was written, "Lucy Carden, on her marriage, from her friend and pastor, the Rev. Charles Calton," and

turning it over it opened at the 51st Psalm: instinctively, I began to read aloud, until I came to the 17th verse, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." At these words my companion wept aloud, and murmured, "Oh, my poor wife,"—and I, too, I knew not why, also wept.

Then we rode on in silence for some time; from a confused reverie I was awakened by my companion saying in a hoarse voice, "Master, I am ready—I can tell you my story now.

"I was born in a village in Hampshire, the youngest of a large family—the son of labouring people. As soon as I had strength and voice enough, I was sent into the fields to scare the birds from the corn, and at eight years old, I began to drive plough for my father, so I got very little schooling but what I picked up in the winter evenings at a school kept by an old pensioned soldier. To tell the truth, I never liked my books when I was young, for which now I have often need to be sorry. But I was a strong hearty lad, and no out-door work came amiss to me. As soon as I could stand to them, I took hold of the stilts of the plough, and by the time I was sixteen, I could do a man's day's work.

"When I was seventeen, I won a great ploughing match. Among the young gentlemen that came to see it was our young squire, that owned nearly all the parish. He had just left college, and come into his fortune, for his father had been dead a many years. He was so much pleased with what he saw at the ploughing-match, that he determined to take the Home Farm into his own hands, and nothing would serve him but that I must be his head plough-



man; indeed, I believe, if I had understood writing and ciphering, he would have made me his bailiff, for he was a young gentleman that nothing could stop when he took a fancy into his head. I mind well when he sent me off at twelve o'clock at night to London, in his own carriage, to buy a team of Suffolk Punches he had heard of from a gentleman that was dining with him. Well, this made a man of me at once. I was as tall as I am now, and I'm afraid I grew spoiled with so much good. I was courting my Lucy at the time. She was the only daughter of the blacksmith in the next village, and if ever there was an angel she was one. The parson and his daughters noticed her a good deal, because she was clever at her book, and sang so sweetly at church. Her father was a drunken old chap; her mother had been dead many years. I used to look out for him when he came down to our village, as he often did to drink and play at bowls, and see him safe over the stiles when he was ill able to walk straight. Many and many a time, after ploughing all day, and supping up my horses, have I walked five miles, half leading, half carrying old Johnny Dunn, for the sake of five minutes' talk to dear Lucy. Well, one night, in a wet autumn—I was up at the Hall to take the squire's instructions; for he loved, when he had strangers from London, to have me in after dinner, to give me a glass o' wine, and make believe of talking farming—old Dunn tried to get home after an evening's bouse by a short cut over a ford I had often led him, missed his footing, and was found by some lads that went next morning to take up their night-lines, stone dead—drowned.

“There was poor Lucy left all alone in the world, for her father, who had been a dragoon farrier, and

married one of Parson Calton's maid-servants, had no relations in that part of the country.

"I was getting good wages: there was a cottage and garden, belonging to the ploughman of the Home Farm, that I had never taken up, because I had lived with my father. The squire made me many presents, and I had saved a little money, made by working at different things in winter evenings, being always handy with tools. Well, to make a long story short, Lucy found her father had left nothing behind him but a quarter's pension he had not had time to drink, a few pounds due for work, and the furniture of his cottage. She had nobody to take care of her, so we moved the furniture to my cottage, and were married before I was nineteen, and on the day Parson Calton gave her that Bible, that never has left me since I left her. Many people blamed us, and wanted us to wait. I don't think good Mr. Calton quite liked it, but his daughters were well pleased, and gave Lucy her wedding-dress. Oh God, sir, when I think upon those days, on two years that followed, and think of what I am, I wonder how I live and keep my senses. There was not a happier couple nor a prettier cottage in the county. My working days were not hard, for I had Lucy to welcome me home; and then on Sundays, to see her dressed in her best and walk across the fields to church, and hear her sing! Why, there was not a lady in the county could compare with her, and I have heard many great gentleman say so.

"I had a child, too, a darling little Lucy. * * * But this was too much happiness to last; we had been married just two years. The squire stopped at our cottage, as he was riding by on his way to London, to settle about a ploughing-match that he

had determined to make up for the next week, and talked over a plan for breaking up a lot of old pasture. A fortnight afterwards the bailiff came down with a letter in his hand, and said, with a grave face, 'Carden, I have some bad news for you; the squire has determined to give up farming, and is going to foreign parts. I am to discharge all the hinds as soon as I can get a tenant for the farm. You are to be paid up to Christmas, and you may keep the cottage until the farm's let, but I rather think farmer Bullivant will take it.'

"Here was a blow; we had thought ourselves provided for for life, and now we had a home and a living to seek. Farmer Bullivant would not keep me on, I knew well; he had his own ploughman, a relation. Well, we were put to sore straits; but at last I got another place, although at lower wages, some distance from my native village. Hard times came on; wages were lowered again and again; and at the same time a cry rose up round the country against the threshing-machines, that were being very much used, and were throwing a good many poor people out of work. The people in England, sir, were not as we are here, sir; a very few words, and one or two desperate fellows could always lead them; they are so ignorant, they are ready for anything when they are badly off.

"I went up one night to get my wages, and behold, when I got me to the farmer's house, the bailiffs were in, and he going to be sold up, and the winter coming on. I walked toward home half mad; passing by a public-house, who should be at the door but the squire's gamekeeper—he kept him on—and he, being sorry to see me so downcast, for he was a good kind fellow, though a gamekeeper, would make me take a glass with him; I think I had

not been in a public-house since I had been married. The drink and the grief flew up into my head; before I got home, I fell in with a crowd of friends and fellow-labourers hallooing and shouting. They had been breaking farmer Bullivant's threshing-machine, and swore they would not leave one in the county. I began to try to persuade them to go away quietly, but they ended by persuading me; we met a machine, as ill-luck would have it, on the road just turning into farmer Grinder's stack-yard. We smashed it to pieces. In the middle of the row the soldiers came up. I was taken in the act, with about twenty others; they lodged us in Winchester Gaol the same night. The assizes were sitting; they tried us in batches, and found us guilty almost as soon as we came into court. I never saw my poor wife until the moment when the judge sentenced me to transportation for life. I hear her scream often now; I wake with it in the middle of the night. We had no time to get any one to speak to character for us; we had no lawyer or counsellor. Such poor people as we were had no friends of any use. The farmers who knew us were too angry and too frightened—although some of them were the first to speak against the threshing-machines. Good Parson Calton had been away, ill and dying, or I do not think it would have happened. For where are we poor countrymen to look for a friend wiser than ourselves, if the parson or the squire does not stand by us?

"My wife came to see me in prison, and wept so we could not talk much; for it was so quick, so sudden—it seemed like a horrid dream; for me to be a felon—for me, that could not strike a blow against any man, except in fair fight—that never wronged a living soul out of a farthing—to be the

same as robbers and murderers! Well, I advised her to get quit of all bits of furniture, and try to get to service, through the Miss Caltons. I knew they were not rich, and could not help except by giving her a good name—by giving a character to the convict's wife! We were to have met again the next day; the poor soul had walked twenty miles to Winchester, and a fruit woman that was in court took pity on her when she fainted, and gave her half her bed. But the same night I was waked up from the first sound sleep I had had since I was taken, and put into a coach with a lot of others, with a guard of soldiers, and sent off to the hulks; and in three days we sailed for Botany Bay, as they called it in England. Oh, sir, that time was terrible. There were many on board that thought the punishment a pleasure voyage. They had no wives, no children to love. They had no good name to lose; they had not lived in one parish to know and love every stick and stone in it. They boasted of their villany, and joked at the disgraceful dress; they only found fault with the food, and the labour of helping to stow the ship; I did not care for the food or the work. They made me a constable on the voyage, and I landed with a good character from the surgeon in charge. I was assigned straight away to Major Z——. You must have heard, sir, what a terrible man he was. A rich man that had forgotten he had once been poor. He had more cattle and stock of all kinds than he could count; he starved us, he cursed us, and very few Mondays passed that he didn't take up five or six for a flogging. But he was very glad to get me, and three or four of the same lot, for it was not often such regular first-rate husbandmen came into the colony, so we were better treated than many.

For, in those times, if masters could be hard where they took a spite, still prisoners had a good chance of getting on. Well, my spirits rose, and I began to have some hope, when I found that, with good luck, I might have my 'ticket,' that would give liberty in the colony in seven years, and when I saw so many who had been prisoners riding about in their carriages, or driving teams of their own, as good as the squire's. Indeed, those that had good masters got on very well, but it was commonly thought that Major Z—— never parted with a good man if he could help it. He was sure to make up some charge and get him flogged, so as to put off the time for his getting a *ticket of leave*.

"I had driven oxen at home, and soon got into the ways of the colony, when, one day, the master came down to see a new piece of land I had been breaking up near a house he was building, and was so pleased that he began to talk quite kindly, although every second word was an oath, and asked me all about myself. Well, I told him, and made bold to say that, as he was going to build a large dairy, if he would send for my wife and child we would serve him for any wages he chose, all the days of our lives. He turned on me like a tiger, he cursed me, he told me he wanted no women or brats on his estate, no canting saints, no parsons, all he wanted was men that could work, and work they should. 'If, you fool,' he said, 'you had asked for a gallon of rum among the gang, you might have had it, and drowned all your troubles, but I'll have no women here, wives or no wives.'

"I think at that moment Satan took possession of me. I was ready to do anything for my liberty, or to be free from my tyrant, and there were tempters enough all round me. A few days afterwards, one

of my fellow-servants, an old hand, who had heard the last part of my master's speech, came to me in the evening, and after telling me that he supposed I had found out that nothing was to be got by fair means, that my master was a rogue, in fact that every one was a rogue who was not a fool, he began to hint that he could tell me a way to get my wife out and my liberty too. I swallowed the bait, I listened; then he went on to show how with money anything could be done in the colony, told me instances of tickets and conditional pardons, besides escapes managed by bribing, and then, when I was thoroughly poisoned, he swore me to secrecy, and explained how, out of a thousand bullocks, a few pair would never be missed; so that all I had to do, when I took a bullock team to Sydney, was to yoke an extra pair of young bullocks, making ten or twelve pair, instead of eight or ten—a butcher, near where the drays generally stood, was already prepared to take and pay for, as many pair of bullocks as I chose to drive in. They were worth from 10*l.* to 12*l.* each, and I was to have 6*l.* for every pair.

"I refused point blank. 'Well,' he said, 'I rely on your honour not to peach.' He knew he had caught me. My master took an early opportunity of having me flogged on a charge of insolence; the magistrates were two friends who had been dining with him. My tempter came to me again, and, on the next opportunity, I drove in the bullocks, and became a *thief*. Having begun I could not stop; my tempter became my tyrant; to drown care I began to drink and to associate with the old hands, and then the money, for which I had resigned body and soul, melted away. What I saved up I knew not what to do with; and so I went on, getting worse and worse, until one day, just as I was driving

a pair of young heifers into the butcher's yard, I was arrested, tried, and convicted on the evidence of my fellow-servant, who, having been found out in another robbery, saved himself by turning on me. I was sentenced to three years' hard labour in an iron gang on the Blue Mountains. What I suffered in those three years no tongue can tell. I was coupled with a wretch who had been a thief from his childhood, a burglar, and a murderer, but there was one man, a political prisoner, sentenced to the gang for striking his overseer, who saved me, and spoke words of comfort to me; my term was shortened a year, for rescuing a gentleman from a bushranger, and Major Z——, having left the colony, I was assigned to my present master. In another year I shall have my ticket, but what I shall do heaven only knows. I have had one letter from my wife; she was living as dairy-maid with one of the Miss Caltons, who had married a country gentleman; they were very good to her, and I think her letter, full of good words, helped to save me from total ruin. But you, sir, are almost the only gentleman that has spoken a kind word to me in the colony. We live like beasts of the field, working and well-fed, but nothing more. On many stations the prisoners don't even know when Sunday comes round, and we die like dogs."

Here he paused: and I felt so much affected by his melancholy story, that I could not at the time answer him, or offer any words of comfort. * *

In my various wanderings I lost sight of Carden for two or three years; but one day, as I was going down to Sydney with a mob of horses of my own for sale, at a roadside inn I met Jem Carden, at the head of a party of splitters and fencers doing some extensive work in the neighbourhood on a new sta-

tion; he was looking thin, haggard, nervous, and was evidently ashamed to meet me. In fact, he was only just recovering from a drunken spree; I taxed him with his folly; he owned it, and showed me the cause. He could earn with ease, at piece-work, from 5*l.* to 8*l.* a week, building stations and stock-yards. Twice he had saved, and paid into the hands of apparently respectable parties, 40*l.*, to remit for the passage of his wife and daughter. The first time the dashing Mr. W—— was insolvent two days after receiving the money. In the second instance he was kept nine months in suspense, and then learned from England by letter, and in the Sydney list of bankrupts, that he had been again swindled. "And what," he asked, when he had concluded this tale of pitiful, ontemptible robbery, "what can a poor fellow do but drink his cares away, when all striving to be honest and happy is in vain?"

I thought, but did not say, how uneven were the laws that sent Jem to the iron gang for stealing a bullock, and had no punishment for those who devoured his hard earnings, and laughed at him from their carriages. Thank God, a better system has been established, and government now charges itself with the passage-money of poor men's relations.

But barren sympathy was of little use, so I turned to the ploughman, and said, "What money have you left?" "About 10*l.* in the landlord's hands; he's an honest man, although a publican." "And what are you to have from this contract?" "My share will be over 40*l.*, and I can get it done in less than six weeks, working long hours." "Then hand me over the 10*l.*, give me your solemn promise not to touch anything stronger than Bushman's tea for twelve months, and to let me have 30*l.* out of your

contract when I return this way, and I will send the money for you."

To cut this long story short, I put the business in the hands of my excellent friend B*****, one of the modern race of Australians, wealthy, warm-hearted, and liberal, who was on his way to England. Within a year the ploughman embraced his wife; they returned with me to my station; they passed some years with me, and some eventful scenes, before the district round me was settled. They have now a station and farm of their own; they are growing rich, as all such industrious people do in Australia, but they have not forgotten that they once were poor. If you need a subscription for a church, a school, or a sick emigrant, you may go to Mr. Carden, safe of a generous answer. It is Mr. Carden now; and perhaps that fine little boy may sit a native representative in an Australian Parliament. A tall youth who rides beside him is not his son, but the orphan child of a poor prisoner, whom he adopted "to make up in part," as he expressed it, "for what happened long ago."

Lucy Carden, now the mother of a numerous brood of Australians, has grown happy and portly, although you may trace on her mild features the tide-marks of past griefs.

The last time I saw them I was on my way to England. "Oh, sir," said the happy husband and father, "tell the wretched and the starving how honest, *sober* labour is sure of a full reward here. Tell them that here poverty may be turned to competence, crime to repentance and happiness. And pray tell the great gentlemen who rule us that we much need both preachers and teachers in this wide Bush of Australia, but that it is *virtuous wives who rule us most*, and in a lovely land make the difference between happiness and misery."

CHAPTER V.

TWO-HANDED DICK.

THE Branding Feast was over. A week's hard work, hard riding, hard swearing, with interludes of blood and dust, stockmen tossed, and horses gored, rails jumped—in fact, a sort of Spanish bull feast without the costume or the idle audience—was ended. The stock were turned loose on the hills and plains to forget their fright and heal the brown wounds lettered on their sides. The neighbours, with their dogs, who came from forty miles round to exchange a friendly turn of aid, had ridden away on their beaten nags, with their lots of lame dogs limping behind them, some gored, some kicked, all footsore, and hoarse with barking. The keg of rum was dry, the last treasured seidlitz powder had fizzed away. It was only by deep manœuvring that my hut-keeper had preserved a dozen of Colonial wine for home drinking. All had departed except my two friends, Rob Dawood and Paginton. Wearied out, we lay on a hillock overlooking my hut, smoking and lazily watching the hawks, on the plain below, stooping at and striking down the coveys of quail that rose before the heads of the sheep travelling to their night folds.

We had had a tough branding bout, a large lot, among them some two-year old bullocks that had never seen the inside of a stockyard since they were calves, and the narrow escapes of empalement had been numerous, and the displays of strength and

agility among the stockmen sufficient to make the reputation of an Andalusian Matador or Picador.

Dawood listened with eager ears to Paginton's stories of Spanish adventures in the bull-ring and on the mountains with banditti and contrabandists. At length he said, "We have some fellows among us that I would back against any in the world for strength, activity, and cool courage, but we have no poets or romance writers to hand down the deeds of our bushmen heroes. Yet there is, in spite of rum, and hard swearing, and slang, and Newgate traditions, a considerable dash of the romantic among our men. I'll tell you a story of a man who is still alive, and then you shall tell me what he would have been if he had lived in the days of iron headpieces and tournaments, or had worn velvet jacket and steeple-crowned hat.

"I was travelling in the Bush one rainy season, and had put up for the night at a small weather board inn at the foot of a mountain range, where drays for the interior, from three different roads, were in the habit of halting before venturing across the one rough Bush road that led to the good country beyond. Accordingly I found a large party of bullock-drivers, stockmen, and shearers on the tramp. Being rather tired with a long hot ride, I swallowed my supper silently, and, choosing the quietest corner, began by the light of the fire to pore over a book, which by some chance had been stuffed into one of my saddle-bags, all the while slowly puffing at my pipe. It was half a volume of an American edition of *Ivanhoe*; so for some time the hubble-bubble of the Bushmen's gossip flowed through, without resting on, my ears. But the publican's stock of rum had been exhausted the day before. As I was the latest comer the broiling and frying had ceased, and stout parties over quarts of

tea and dudeens filled with the best cavendish were set in for a spell at yarnning.

"Very soon sleep was too strong for me; I nodded off, recovered myself, nodded off again, and started and rubbed my eyes on hearing one of the jolly party say, in what he meant for a whisper, 'Peter, you are a scholar, just borrow the book from the swell, as he can't keep his peepers open.' The hint was enough, I hastened to hand over the dog-eared leaves, and then rolling myself in my blanket tried to make up for lost time.

"The half volume began at the preparations for the tournament at Ashby de la Zouch. Sleepy as I was, the running commentary of the Bushmen continually waked me up. It would not do to repeat the remarks, anything but flattering to the Hebrew, on the interview between Ivanhoe and Isaac. The battle between Gurth and the miller drew down great applause, but their satisfaction became uproarious during the tournament; and when Le Noir Fainéant dashed in and freed Ivanhoe from his unfair opponent, they gave a loud cheer; two of them exclaiming, 'I'm blessed if that's not just like Two-handed Dick.' 'Aye,' cried a third, 'I'll tell you what it is, mates, them was the times that Peter has been pattering to us, lads; I wish they'd only come over again; it's this confounded reading and writing that don't give us plain fellows a chance. As for Dick, I will say this, he's the very moral of that big black fellow, and I'll be hanged, if it were to come to fighting for a living, if we three and Two-handed Dick wouldn't take the whole Legislative Council, the Governor and Judges—one down t' other come on—and Dick should take any two at once.'

"Here I dozed off, but was wakened more than once by cries of 'Bravo, Dick!' 'That's your sort!'

‘Houray, Dick!’ these tokens of approval being showered on Richard Cœur de Lion, whom the Bush audience chose to identify with their Colonial hero.

“For months after that night this idea of Two-handed Dick haunted me, but the bustle of establishing a new station at length drove it out of my head.

“I suppose a year had elapsed from the night when the fame of the double-fisted stockman first reached me. I had to take a three days’ journey to buy a score of fine-woolled rams, through a country quite new to me, which I chose because it was a short cut recently discovered. I got over, the first day, forty-five miles comfortably. The second day, in the evening, I met an ill-looking one-eyed fellow walking, carrying a broken musket, and his arm in a sling. He seemed sulky, so I kept my hand on the trigger of my pistol all the time I was talking to him; he begged a little tea and sugar, which I could not spare, but I threw him a fig of tobacco. In answer to my questions about his arm, he told me, with a string of oaths, that a bull, down in some mimosa flats, a day’s journey ahead, had charged him, flung him into a water-hole, broken his arm, and made him lose his sugar and tea bag. Bulls in Australia are generally quiet, but this reminded me that some of the Highland black cattle imported by the Australian Company, after being driven off by a party of Gully Rakers (cattle stealers), had escaped into the mountains and turned quite wild. Out of this herd, a bull sometimes, when driven off by a stronger rival, would descend to the mimosa flats and wander about, solitary and dangerously fierce.

“It struck me, as I rode off, that it was quite as well my friend’s arm and musket had been disabled, for he did not look the sort of man it would be

pleasant to meet in a thicket of scrub, if he fancied the horse you rode. So, keeping one eye over my shoulder, and a sharp look-out for any other traveller of the same breed, I rode off at a brisk pace. I made out afterwards that my foot friend was One-eyed Jerry, well known as a bushranger.

"At sundown, when I reached the hut where I had intended to sleep, I found it deserted, and so full of fleas, I thought it better to camp out; so I hobbled out old Grey-tail on the best piece of grass I could find, and very poor it was.

"The next morning, when I went to look for my horse he was nowhere to be found. I put the saddle on my head and tracked him for hours; it was evident the poor beast had been travelling away in search of grass. I walked until my feet were one mass of blisters; at length, when about to give up the search in despair, having quite lost the track on stony ground, I came upon the marks quite fresh in a bit of swampy ground, and a few hundred yards further found Master Grey-tail rolling in the mud of a nearly dry water-hole as comfortably as possible. I put down the saddle and called him. At that moment I heard a loud roar and crash in a scrub behind me, and out rushed at a terrific pace a black bull charging straight at me. I had only just time to throw myself on one side flat on the ground as he thundered by me. My next move was to scramble among a small clump of trees, one of great size, the rest were mere saplings.

"The bull, having missed his mark, turned again, and first revenged himself by tossing my saddle up in the air, until, fortunately, it lodged in some bushes; then, having smelt me out, he commenced a circuit round the trees, stamping, pawing, and bellowing frightfully. With his red eyes and long sharp horns

he looked like a demon ; I was quite unarmed, having broken my knife the day before ; my pistols were in my holsters, and I was wearied to death. My only chance consisted in dodging him round the trees until he should be tired out. Deeply did I regret having left my faithful dogs Boomer and Bounder behind.

"The bull charged again and again, sometimes coming with such force against the tree that he fell on his knees, sometimes bending the saplings behind which I stood until his horns almost touched me. There was not a branch I could lay hold of to climb up. How long this awful game of "*touch-wood*" lasted, I know not ; it seemed hours. After the first excitement passed off, weariness again took possession of me, and it required all the instinct of self-preservation to keep me on my feet ; several times the bull left me for a few seconds, pacing suddenly away, bellowing his malignant discontent ; but before I could cross over to a better position he always came back at full speed. My tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, my eyes grew hot and misty, my knees trembled under me, I felt it impossible to hold out until dark. At length I grew desperate, and determined to make a run for the opposite covert the moment the bull turned towards the water-hole again. I felt sure I was doomed, and thought of it until I grew indifferent. The bull seemed to know I was worn out, and grew more fierce and rapid in his charges, but just when I was going to sit down under the great tree and let him do his worst, I heard the rattle of a horse among the rocks above, and a shout that sounded like the voice of an angel. Then came the barking of a dog, and the loud reports of a stockwhip, but the bull, with his devilish eyes fixed on me, never moved.

"Up ~~at~~ full speed ; crack fell the

lash on the black bull's hide ; out spurted the blood in a long streak. The bull turned savagely—charged the horseman. The horse wheeled round just enough to baffle him—no more—again the lash descended, cutting like a long flexible razor, but the mad bull was not to be beaten off by a whip : he charged again and again ; but he had met his match ; right and left, as needed, the horse turned again and again, sometimes pivoting on his hind, sometimes on his fore legs.

“The stockman shouted something, leaped from his horse, and strode forward to meet the bull with an open knife between his teeth. As the beast lowered his head to charge, he seemed to catch him by the horns. There was a struggle, a cloud of dust, a stamping like two strong men wrestling—I could not see clearly ; but the next moment the bull was on his back, the blood welling from his throat, his limbs quivering in death.

“The stranger, covered with blood and dust, came up to me, saying as unconcernedly as if he had been killing a calf in a slaughter-house, ‘He’s dead enough, young man ; he won’t trouble anybody any more.’

“I walked two or three paces towards the dead beast ; my senses left me—I fainted.

“When I came to myself, my horse was saddled, bridled, and tied up to a bush. My stranger friend was busy flaying the bull.

“‘I should like to have a pair of boots out of the old devil’ he observed, in answer to my inquiring look, ‘before the dingoes and the eagle hawks dig into his carcase.’

“We rode out of the flats up a gentle ascent, as night was closing in. I was not in a talking humour ; but I said, ‘You have saved my life !’

“ ‘Well, I rather think I have,’ but this was muttered in an under tone ; ‘it’s not the first I have saved, or taken either, for that matter.’

“I was too much worn out for thanking much, but I pulled out a silver hunting-watch and put it into his hand. He pushed it back, almost roughly, saying, ‘No, sir, not now ; I shan’t take money or money’s worth for that, though I may ask something some time. It’s nothing, after all. I owed the old black devil a grudge for spoiling a blood filly of mine ; besides, though I didn’t know it when I rode up first, and went at the beast to take the devil out of myself as much as anything,—I rather think that you are the young gentleman that ran through the bush at night to Manchester Dan’s hut, when his wife was bailed up by the blacks, and shot one-eyed Jackey, in spite of the Governor’s proclamation.’

“ ‘You seem to know me,’ I answered ; ‘pray may I ask who you are, if it is a fair question, for I cannot remember ever having seen you before ?’

“ ‘Oh, they call me Two-handed Dick in this country.’

“The scene in the roadside inn flashed on my recollection. Before I could say another word, a sharp turn round the shoulder of the range we were traversing brought us in sight of the fire of a shepherd’s hut. The dogs ran out barking ; my companion hallooed and cracked his whip, and the hut-keeper came to meet us with a fire-stick in his hand.

“ ‘Lord bless my heart and soul ! Dick, is that thee at last ? Well, I thought thee wert never coming,’ cried the hut-keeper, a little man, who came limping forward very fast with the help of a crutch-handled stick. ‘I say, Missis, Missis, here’s Dick, here’s Two-handed Dick.’”

“This was uttered in a shrill, sobbing sort of

scream. Out came 'Missis' at the top of her speed, and began hugging Dick as he was getting off his horse—her arms reached a little above his waist—laughing and crying, both at the same time, while her husband kept fast hold of the stockman's hand, muttering, 'Lord, Dick, I'm so glad to see thee.' Meanwhile the dogs barking, and a flock of weaned lambs just penned, ba'ing, made such a riot, that I was fairly bewildered. So, feeling myself one too many, I slipped away, leading off both the horses to the other side of the hut, where I found a shepherd, who showed me a grass paddock to feed the nags a bit before turning them out for the night. I said to him, 'What is the meaning of all this going on between your mate and his wife, and the big stockman?'

"The meaning, stranger! why, that's Two-handed Dick, and my mate is Little Jemmy that he saved, and Charley Anvils at the same time, when the blacks slaughtered the rest of the party—near on a dozen of them.'

"On returning, I found supper smoking on the table, and we made a regular 'Bush' meal. The stockman then told my adventure, and, when they had exchanged all the news, I had little difficulty in getting the hutkeeper to the point I wanted; the great difficulty lay in preventing man and wife from telling the same story at the same time.

"When first I met Dick,' said the lame hutkeeper, 'he was second stockman to Mr. Ronalds, and I took a shepherd's place there; it was my second place in this country, for you see I left the Old Country in a bad year for the weaving trade, and was one of the first batch of free emigrants that came out; the rest were mostly Irish. I found shepherding suit me very well, and my missis was hut-

keeper. Well, Dick and I got very thick ; I used to write his letters for him, and read in an evening, and so on. Well, though I undertook a shepherd's place, I soon found I could handle an axe pretty well. Throwing the shuttle gives the use of the arms, you see, and Dick put into my head that I could make more money if I took to making fences—I sharpening the rails and making the mortice-holes, and a stranger man setting them. I did several jobs at odd times, and was thought very handy. Well, Mr. Ronalds, during the time of the great drought, five years ago, determined to send up a lot of cattle to the North, where he had heard there was plenty of water and grass, and form a station there. Dick was picked out as stockman ; a young gentleman, a relation of Mr. Ronalds, went as head of the party—a very foolish, conceited young man, who knew very little of Bush life, and would not be taught. There were eight splitters and fencers, besides Charley Anvils, the blacksmith, and two bullock-drivers.

“ ‘ I got leave to go because I wanted to see the country ; and Dick asked. My missis was sorely against my going. I was to be storekeeper, as well as do any fencing work, if wanted.

“ ‘ We had two drays, and were well armed. We were fifteen days going up before we got into the new country, and then we travelled five days ; sometimes twenty-four hours without water ; and sometimes had to unload the drays two or three times a day, to get over creeks. The fifth day we came to very fine land ; the grass grew so high, it met over our horses' necks, and the river was a chain of water-holes, all full, and as clear as crystal. The kangaroos were hopping about as plentiful as rabbits in a warren ; and the grass by the river side had re-

gular tracks of the emus, where they went down to drink.

“ ‘ We had been among signs of the Blacks, too, for five days, but had not seen anything of them, although we could hear the devils cooing at night-fall, calling to each other. We kept regular watch and watch at first—four sentinels, and every man sleeping with his gun at hand.

“ ‘ Now, as it was Dick’s business to tail (follow) the cattle, five hundred head, I advised him to have his musket sawed off in the barrel, so as to be a more handy size for using on horseback. He took my advice ; and Charley Anvils made a very good job of it, so that he could bring it under his arm when hanging at his back from a rope sling, and fire with one hand. It was lucky I thought of it, as it turned out.

“ ‘ At length the overseer fixed on a spot for the station. It was very well for water and grass, and a very pretty view, as he said, but it was too near a thicket where the Blacks would lie in ambush, for safety. The old Bushmen wanted it planted on a neck of land, where the waters protected it all but one side, and there a row of fence would have made it secure. But the young swell would have it all his own way.

“ ‘ Well, we set to work, and soon had a lot of tall trees down. Charley put up his forge and his grindstone, to keep the axe sharp, and I stayed with him. Dick went tailing the cattle, and the overseer sat on a log and looked on. The second day a mob of Blacks came down on the opposite side of the river. They were quite wild, regular *myals*, but some of our men with green branches went and made peace with them. They liked our bread and sugar ; and after a short time we had a lot of them helping

to draw rails, fishing for us, bringing wild honey, kangaroos, rats, and firewood, in return for bread and sugar, so we began to be less careful about our arms. We gave them iron tomahawks, and they soon found out that they could cut out an opossum from a hollow in half-an-hour with one of our tomahawks, while it took a day with one of their own stone ones.

“‘And so the time passed very pleasantly. We worked away. The young men and gins worked for us. The chiefs adorned themselves with the trinkets and clothes we gave them, fished and hunted, and admired themselves in the river.

“‘Dick never trusted them ; he stuck to his cattle; and warned us : so the overseer called him a blood-thirsty murdering blackguard for his pains.

“‘One day the whole party were at work, chopping and trimming weather-boards for the hut, the Blacks helping as usual. I was turning the grindstone for Charley Anvils, and Dick was coming up to the dray to get some tea, but there was the brow of a hill between him and us ; the muskets were all piled in one corner. I heard a howl, then a scream—Lord bless you, our camp was full of Blacks, all painted and armed. When I raised my head, I saw the chief, Captain Jack we called him, with a broad axe in his hand ; the next minute he had chopped the overseer’s head clean off ; in two minutes all my mates were on the ground. Three or four came running up to us ; one threw a spear at me, which I half parried with a pannikin I was using to wet the grindstone, but it fixed deep in my hip, and part of it, I believe, is there still. Charley Anvils had an axe in his hand, and cut down the first two fellows that came up to him, but he was floored in a minute with twenty wounds. They were so eager to kill me,

that one of them, luckily, or I should not have been alive now, cut the spear in my hip short off. Another, a young lad I had sharpened a tomahawk for a few days before, chopped me across the head; you can see the white hair all along the place. Down I fell, and nothing could have saved us, but the other savages had got the tarpaulin off, and were screaming with delight, plundering the drays, which called my enemies off. Just then, Dick came in sight, but although there were more than a hundred black devils, all armed, painted, bloody, and yelling, he never stopped or hesitated, but rode slap through the camp, fired bang among them, killing two, and knocking out the brains of another. As he passed by a top-rail, where an axe was sticking, he caught it up. The men in the camp were dead enough; the chief warriors had made the rush there, and every one was pierced with several spears, or cut down from close behind by axes in the hands of the chiefs. We, being further off, had been attacked by the boys only. Dick turned towards us, and shouted my name; I could not answer, but I managed to sit up an instant; he turned towards me, leaned down, caught me by the jacket—I am but a little chap—and dragged me on before him like a log. Just then, Charley, who had crept under the grindstone, cried, “Oh, Dick, don’t leave me!” As he said that, a lot of them came running down, for they had seen enough to know that, unless they killed us all, their job would not be half done. As Dick turned to face them, they gave way and flung spears, but they could not hurt him, though they managed to get between us and poor Charley. Dick rode back a circuit, and dropped me among some bushes on a hill, where I could see all. Four times he charged through and through a whole mob, with an axe in

one hand and his short musket in the other. He cut them down right and left, as if he had been mowing; he scared the wretches, although the old women kept screeching and urging them on, as they always do. At length, by help of his stirrup leather, he managed to get Charley up behind him. He never could have done it, but his mare fought, and bit, and turned when he bid her, so he threw the bridle on her neck, and could use that terrible left arm of his. Well, he came up to the hill and lifted me on, and away we went for three or four miles, but we knew the mare could not stand it long, so Dick got off and walked. When the Blacks had pulled the drays' loads to pieces, they began to follow us, but Dick never lost heart—"

"Nay, mate," interrupted Dick, "once I did; I shall never forget it; when I came to put my last bullet in it was too big."

"Good heavens," I exclaimed, "what did you do?"

"Why, I put the bullet in my mouth, and kept chawing and chawing it, and threatening the black devils all the while, until at last it was small enough, and then I rammed it down, and dropped on my knee, and waited until they came within twenty yards, and then I picked off Captain Jack, the biggest villain of them all."

Here Dick, being warmed, continued the story:—"We could not stop; we marched all evening and all night, and when the two poor creturs cried for water, as they did most of the night, as often as I could I filled my boots, and gave them to drink. I led the horse, and travelled seventy miles without halting for more than a minute or two. Towards the last they were as helpless as worn-out sheep. I tied them on. We had the luck to fall in with a party travelling, just when the old mare was about giving

in, and then we must all have died for want of water. Charley Anvils had eighteen wounds, but, except losing two fingers, is none the worse. Poor Jemmy, there, will never be fit for anything but a hutkeeper; as for me, I had some scratches—nothing to hurt; and the old mare lost an ear. I went back afterwards with the police, and squared accounts with the Blacks

“And so you see, stranger, the old woman thinks I saved her old man’s life, although I would have done as much for any one; but I believe there are some gentlemen in Sydney say I ought to be hung for what I did. Anyhow, since that scrimmage in the Bush, they always call me ‘TWO-HANDED DICK.’”

CHAPTER VI.

BUSHRANGERS AND WILD BLACKS.

"I THINK," said Paginton, "Dick had the making of a French Marshal in him if he had had the chance. But here we grow so fast that our age of adventures is already almost past. In another ten years, if things continue on their present footing, tales of Blacks and Bushrangers will exist only as nursery stories in Australia, but when I first came out to the colony, the case was very different indeed. Black tribes, flourishing by hundreds, were like bands of angry wolves where they now limp like lame foxes by ones and twos. As for the bushrangers, they were generally convict servants too lazy to work, or, driven out by the cruelty of unjust masters, had fled into the Bush to avoid repeated flogging, and lived by plundering the stations or by lifting cattle. When heifers used to be worth five pounds to ten pounds, it was worth while to be gully-raker—that is, cattle-stealer; but when they fell to forty shillings, the profit on a robbing speculation was not worth the risk.

"At that time, some of them made little parties to go out and stop the drays on any unfrequented road, or rob passengers near towns; while others, who desired to have the exclusive privilege of pocketing the booty, and were desperate enough for the adventure, went alone. But a good horse formed an essential part of the bushranger's equipment, whether he

were a thief in his own right, or a member of a troop of sable banditti.

"Desire to save my property from reckless plunder made me pay a sort of black-mail to these fellows. When my drays were about to travel nearly two hundred miles over a very bad road, I used to remind the bullock-drivers that, if they should meet with any one upon the road in very urgent want of tea or flour, they had better be good-natured, and supply them with a little. In this way my stores travelled safely, when those of my neighbours were rifled, and when even their drays were often wantonly backed over the edge of some precipice. This, no doubt, was chiefly due to the black-mail I paid; but I had managed to get the good-will of these fellows, by earning a character for humanity.

"During the assignment time I never was a flogging master. If a man was saucy to me, I might, perhaps, knock him down, but that was a proceeding taken in good part; the convict looked upon it as a very different thing to being taken before a magistrate and forfeiting a year of liberty.

"One evening, when returning from a three days' journey, I found myself within fifty miles of my station—at that time recently established—on the extreme borders of known land; my horse was exhausted, for we had been travelling since daybreak. I had dismounted, and was steering by the Southern Cross, until I noticed the reflection of a fire, and heard an echo of rude laughter in the neighbourhood. Here, I thought, are some bullock-drays encamped; I shall light my pipe, and get a quart of tea. I passed from the shadows of the trees, and stooping down to light my pipe, with a 'Well, mates, how goes it?' was welcomed by the pointed muskets of a couple of shaggy men, in garments

wonderfully patched. Four others at the same time ran to their arms, but seeing that I puffed away at the lighted brand, apparently concerned about no greater matter than the lighting of my pipe, and noticing, perhaps, that my horse was exhausted, they exchanged their proposed warm reception with the muskets for a 'Halloo, stranger, where do you come from? Have you any tobacco?' 'I am going,' I said, 'to my station on Pelican Creek, and I have been up to the Crownland Commissioner, to see about the boundaries of my new run. I have plenty of tobacco, but not a skerrick of tea or sugar.' So saying, I pulled out my tobacco-pouch, which I had taken care to supply well, for it is the best purse to carry on a journey in the Bush; and then, unbuckling my horse's girths, threw my saddle down before the fire. To have quitted my new friends upon a tired horse would have been quite impossible; my safety lay, therefore, in treating them with confidence.

"The first thing to which they attended was the filling of their pipes from my pouch; the next thing to which they attended was lighting them. They then inhaled and puffed the smoke with an eagerness that I can compare only to the zest with which men swallow water after a long journey in a drought.

"Presently they consulted apart; while I, preparing for the night, hobbled the fore-legs of my horse, rubbed his ears dry, and shook out my blanket. After a few minutes, having made an end of whispering, one of the men handed to me a quart pot of tea—there were three such pots boiling at the fire—and, scraping back the wood ashes, he took out and fairly divided a huge damper among us all, to which he added, for my share, the hind-

quarters of a kangaroo rat. There were frizzling on the fire, at the same time, certain bits of meat, which at once I concluded to be rough mutton-chops. After my hosts had smoked their first pipes, they attended to the supper, and commenced a running fire of questions. Which way had I gone? Whom had I seen? Was not my name Lawdon? No, it was not. Was the Commissioner coming up to my station? And did I know a man by the name of Black Dick? Yes: he was my best bullock-driver. Who was my stockman? Red Irish Dan. Then they again whispered together, and I could overhear such comfortable words as, 'The swell's all right;' 'He's *jammock*;' 'He won't split.' Finally they came back; and when they had continued smoking and eating far into the night, they packed up the unused tea and flour in the two sleeves of a shirt; asked me to oblige them with the whole of my tobacco, and advised me to sleep away from the fire, since it was possible that the Blacks might creep up and throw in a shower of spears. I took the hint, rolled myself up in my blanket, and, in spite of all misgivings, fell asleep. At sunrise, awaking stiff and chilly, I found my blanket gone. Fortunately, I had nothing else worth taking about me, and my friends had not robbed me of my horse. The great hollow gum-tree which had formed the fire still smouldered; so I warmed myself before it, and nibbled a bit of the damper left behind by my departed hosts.

"On the evening of the same day I reached my station. A fortnight afterwards, Black Dick came up with the light cart from Maitland, and there was great mirth in the prisoners' hut. The joke was in due time imparted to me. Moody's overseer—who had the credit, like his master, of

serving out short rations, and getting the men too freely flogged—had met six “boys” in the Tea-tree Flats, had been taken off his horse, stripped, tied to a tree, and presented with a service of three dozen lashes. Of course he was then left to get home as he might be able, naked and on foot. From the description, I at once knew that these six men had been my supper companions in the Bush.

“That was my first adventure: nothing very terrible. The next, however, you will find, was serious enough, and throws some light on the fate of One-eyed Jerry; and these two are all the stories of Bush peril that I can tell you from my own personal experience.

“I was going down to Sydney, after two years in the Bush, only varied by an overland journey to South Australia. My wool had gone on a week before, and my intended companion, Charley Malcolm, had disappointed me, being suddenly prevented from travel by affection of the heart. He had seen (and married within the week) a pretty Scotch girl, who had come into our district as nurse in the doctor’s family. I set out, accordingly, alone; with a carbine at my back, and two of the best kangaroo dogs in the country for my escort; riding such a horse as no man ever can own twice in a single life. I bought him, at two years old, from the stockman by whom he was bred (at a very long price), and had spent a great deal more pains in training him than we generally can afford, in the Bush, to spend on horse-flesh. We set out, as usual, at a foot-pace to do thirty-mile stages, which would bring us to Maitland in five or six days. On the very first day I was tempted foolishly to chase a stray emu, because I had promised a few feathers to some Sydney friends. The emu was caught; but Moonlight, my horse,

putting his foot into a wombat-hole, gave me a fall over his head, by which the stock of my carbine was snapped asunder. So, for the rest of the journey, I was doomed to go unarmed.

"Before getting to Liverpool Plains, at a Bush inn, where I passed the night, there was a great talk about a certain One-eyed Jerry, a bushranger, whom the mounted police had been seeking for the last three weeks. In chase of him, a few days before my arrival, they had shot his horse; but he had, nevertheless, contrived to get away into the scrub, and to find a hiding-place among the rocks. It was supposed he was by that time driven to extremities, as no one would dare to help him, if there had been any one inclined; and he could not venture so much as to light a fire to cook his food, lest the smoke or flame might betray his whereabouts to his pursuers. He was a murderous fellow, for whom no one had a good word; and it seemed to be agreed on all sides that, if he did not find means to get another horse to carry him into another district, his life could not be worth many weeks' purchase. Being tired, and knowing full well that Bush travellers were given to ornament their narratives, I paid little attention at the time to all this gossip, and went drowsily to bed.

"Crossing the ranges on the following day, I had to pursue a narrow track along the steep side of a hill which went down by steps into the valley. Before I reached the open forest, as I was winding round a long peninsula of rocks, my dogs dashed after a kangaroo. In another minute I was hailed by a voice immediately overhead, shouting, with wild oaths, 'Bail up, or I'll blow out your brains!' and I caught a glimpse of an extremely ugly one-eyed face, and of the muzzle of a rusty musket. There

was no time for consideration. The gentleman above required my horse; I regarded that horse as my choicest treasure; therefore I pressed the said horse's sides, threw myself flat on his back, and away we went, tumbling rather than galloping along the narrow pathway of uneven stones. The musket, of course, was discharged, and the slugs whistled round me, raking up the skin of my neck and shoulders; but we soon turned the jut of the peninsula from which the bushranger had fired. The narrow defile into the open forest being partly blocked up by a small tree that had fallen across it, the gentleman of the bush was taking a short cut to meet me at this point, holding his musket clubbed ready to deal, when he could get at me, a desperate blow. He had evidently set his mind upon bestriding Moonlight.

"We got to the barrier nearly at the same time. Moonlight went at and cleared the tree like a kangaroo; but, as he alighted on the other side, he tripped and fell upon his head among the brambles. I rolled over him, still holding firmly by the reins. It was well for me that the bushranger, being out of breath, missed the blow aimed at my devoted head. It was parried for me by the strong arm of an overhanging tree, which caused the musket to recoil at an unexpected moment with so much force as to fly out of the ruffian's hand, and to tumble down the hill side. My horse rose, and the man ran to seize him, shouting threats and oaths against my eyes, limbs, blood, and liver. I still maintained my hold upon the reins and the stirrup; my blood was up, and with all my force I cut my assailant across the face with my doubled stock-whip. Then he grappled with me, and we fell. He was a bigger, broader man than I, but star-

vation had weakened him, and I was in the better condition for a wrestle. We rolled over and over; at first each trying to get the other down. I had his left wrist grasped in my right hand; my left hand, missing his throat, tugged at his chin and beard. He clenched my neckerchief in his fist and dug his knuckles into my throat, and would certainly have strangled me, had not my neckerchief—which was thin—given way. Then he attempted to get out his knife; but in the moment when he put down his right hand—being then undermost—I threw back my own hand and struck him a stout blow on his only eye. I do not know how long the struggle lasted, but my strength began to fail. His knees were once or twice upon my chest, and although I threw him off, my hands were losing power rapidly.

“Until I felt that his endurance surpassed mine—until I despaired—I had been silent, while my antagonist most vehemently swore: I summoned, however, at last my failing strength for a loud shout to my hounds. Suddenly his cursing took the form of a wild howl of rage and pain, his grasp relaxed, and I saw him fighting at the jaws of my two fierce and faithful dogs. Supporting myself on my hands and knees, I, like a savage, urged them on in feeble whispers—they were my last hope, and my strong hope. One dog had the robber by the throat, the other had plunged his sharp muzzle into his side. Shrieking horribly, he writhed and fought with them. As soon as I could gather strength I arose, and with faltering steps reached my horse, who waited, trembling, for his master. I mounted, and without looking back pushed over fifteen miles, until we halted at a cattle station. My dogs did not follow me. I waited an hour for them before they came in; then

they refused their ordinary supper of mutton, went to sleep, and dreamed and growled fiercely before the fire.

“While I was in the colony, I never mentioned the matter to any man except to the head of the police. One-eyed Jerry was never heard of more. The dingoes and eagle-hawks soon provide decent burial for any dead body of man or beast left in the Bush. I sold Moonlight for India—he was too good a horse for my rough work. In India he soon rose to merited distinction, and trotted about with a Governor-General upon his back.”

CHAPTER VII.

FATHER GABRIEL.

At length I found the effect of steady saving with some successful trading, in a nice lump of ready money, and a certain degree of credit where I was known. My old horse-training propensities had served me well ; I could buy Bush horses for a few pounds, and sell them perfectly trained to Sydney dandies at English prices. So by these means, and a little successful investment, I was able to purchase the transfer of a station, and set up for myself, and there, after a season of dulness, met one of my best friends.

A bachelor's station in the Bush, or even a bachelor's farm, is generally a wretched place. Founded to make money and nothing else, decency and comfort are little cultivated. A rude bark-covered hut for the overseer or master ; another, still ruder, for the servants ; the ground barebeaten with the feet of cattle ; not a vestige of garden, although the soil be ever so fertile ; a stockyard, ankle deep in dust ; such are the usual characteristics ; the head of the station being a young man, who may often be found dirty, barefooted, in his shirt sleeves, sitting alone, in melancholy state, on an old tea-chest, with a mess of salt meat and tea without milk before him, longing for a visit from a neighbour or traveller, without books or newspapers, obliged,—if he would keep up his authority, to hold very little communication with his men.

As for the men, harassed and haggard-looking,

ragged, unshaven, unwashed, they crowd together in an evening, perhaps fifteen or twenty in number, smoking, and swearing, and jabbering with two or three black gins, their only female companions, purchased, stolen, or strayed from a neighbouring tribe. But on the stations of married squatters, or where small settlers of a good sort have settled, either on grants or purchases, as dairy and grain-growing farmers, a very different sight is presented,—wives and gardens, children and green vegetables, improve the fare, the scenery, and the society. Thank heaven, every day fixity of tenure is making its way, and in a few years there is no reason why pastoral Australia, with immense advantages of climate, should not resemble that pastoral Scotland whose domestic virtues have afforded so many exquisite pictures for poets and romancists.

When I first landed in the colony, agriculture was reckoned very *low*, the Highland spirit of contempt for rural toil had descended on our nomadic aristocracy. Not being bred to it, I could not share the feeling; and after months of men-companions, and salt meat, and damper fare, grateful to my eyes was the first view of what I will call (to mention real names would not be fair) “Father Gabriel’s Happy Valley”—a bright oasis, that within the memory of the oldest settler had not been touched by drought; green, and corn-waving, when all around the other side of the range was brown and barren; cheerful and alive, too, with fat children running and riding in play—for children with us ride almost as soon as they walk; handsome young wives, and nice tidy old women, busy washing under the verandahs of their cottages, or in their gardens, or making cheese in the open air under a great tree, converted into part of a machine for cheese pressing.

From a great field of oaten hay "the mowers' scythes sent back a flickering silver sheen," where Father Gabriel, a hale old man, led the way before a long string of sons and sons-in-law, while the little ones followed and bound the sheaves. It was almost a home scene, beneath a brighter sun and clearer blue sky than is ever found in England.

Father Gabriel, having been one of the early free-farmer settlers, had obtained a grant in this favoured spot, and made the most of it by growing wheat in increasing quantities, which, during a four years' drought, he sold at 14s. and 15s. a bushel. With the help of a long family he became really rich; but instead of turning "*gentleman*," after the vulgar colonial fashion, or entering into wild speculations, he had pursued his plain yeoman style of life, collecting round him as many as possible of his neighbours from his native country, so that he had formed a sort of north-country settlement, cut off by barren land and rocky ranges from near contact with smaller stations, until they pushed on beyond them. He and his friends had built a stone chapel, from which on Sundays the powerful voice of Father Gabriel might be heard expounding the Scriptures, something in the manner of a Presbyterian of Cromwell's day. He discontinued this practice when a dissenting minister reached the district, a few years after my arrival. This chapel was very like a barn, roofed with wood slabs or shingles; being the only stone building in the district, it used to be very much admired. During service there were sometimes fifteen or twenty horses, with a fair share of side-saddles, tied up in waiting, belonging to families who had ridden ten, and even twenty miles, to service. But they were seldom allowed to return

any great distance without sharing the hospitality of the elders.

I made the acquaintance of one of the sons, (the old man had twelve children, and twice that number of grandchildren) at a kangaroo hunt, and we became intimate, as he was always asking questions about England, English farming, and English sports; and I was glad to learn bushmanship, in which Kit Gabriel was a perfect master. One day he asked me over to a shearing feast. We had to cross a country which I will describe, because it is a fair specimen of the grand but monotonous scenery of Australia. I love Australia; there I spent my happiest days, triumphing over the ill-fortune that drove me from England; there I found friends of the warmest and truest; there I quaffed deep the cup of hospitality, and found no dregs. With that bright land are associated the memory of cheerful days of toil and nights of harmless revelling, of delicious gallops over far rolling plains, of slow-pacing rides through miles of silent forest, of thought-inspiring reveries, within sight and sound of the broad calm waters of the Pacific. But, although I can recall scenes of horrid grandeur, worthy of the pencil of Salvator, and of wild joyous beauty, to which even the imagination of a Turner or Danby could scarcely do justice, I must own that the sameness of the scenery for hundreds of miles, and, still more, the sameness of the evergreen foliage, except in the tropical zones, and the absence of perfect cultivation, render the greater part of Australia inferior in natural beauty, and the power of calling up pleasing associations, to the districts of England, where wild scenery and high cultivation may be viewed at one glance beneath a summer or autumnal

sun. As, for instance, in Derbyshire, with its rose-covered cottages and wood-crowned hills ; in Nottinghamshire, with its trim farms and forests of old oak ; in Gloucestershire, with its green valleys streaked with silver streams, where even the fulling-mill and the factory become picturesque. And then, again, Australia has no *Past* :—but she has a *Future*, and it should be the endeavour of every colonist to make that Future read well.

But to return to my ride. Our way lay over a hard sand-track ; on one side, a river, or rather chain of pools ; on the other, steep hills (Colonially, *ranges*), covered with Australian pine—a beautiful tree, with excellent qualities for working freely, with a colour and smell like sandal-wood, but useless for house use, as it breeds vermin. After an hour, we turned up stony ridges, thinly sprinkled with iron-bark trees for three miles, until the range broke off short, in sight of a broad creek, which we forded, and, leaving the river, rode over undulating ground, timbered with box and iron-bark ; then over a thickly-wooded sandy, scrubby ridge, at the end of which our course lay for a mile through an open box forest, beautifully grassed, like an English meadow, which opened upon a splendid plain, as thinly dotted with trees as a nobleman's park, which extended almost as far as the eye could reach, until, just on the horizon before us, appeared a dark boundary line, formed by a dense forest. But after riding several miles, during which we were constantly, but almost imperceptibly, descending, we came to a river never known to fail.

It was in a valley, intersected by this river, that Father Gabriel's settlement lay. Soon we could hear the lowing of the heifers, answered by their calves in the home-station pens ; the swash-swashing of an oxen-driven threshing-machine, a recent in-

vestment of the patriarch's; and presently, amid other farmyard sounds, the shrill moaning of a fiddle. I don't know which was most pleasant and homelike. A lot of horses, still hot, with saddle-marks, in a paddock; two young fellows and a girl in a nankin habit, cantering in front of us; and a lot of men, washed, shaved, and in holiday costume, gave notice of the gathering.

A young bushman, in his broad-leaved hat, with two yards of taffeta flying; his brown, intelligent face—hair, beard, and moustachios neatly trimmed; blue or red woollen shirt, loose trousers, broad belt; seated like a centaur on his half-bred Arab, is, perhaps, as picturesque a figure as you may see anywhere in a voyage round the world. On this afternoon, not one, but some dozen such, were at the gathering.

We passed the chapel, and came in sight of the house—planted on a declivity, in sight of the river, but out of reach of winter's floods—a composite building, which first consisted of a mere hut and garden, then grew by addition to a good six-roomed one-storied cottage of sawn boards, with glazed windows, a verandah all round, covered with beautiful creepers, eventually increased by a large double room of stone, the work of the stonemason colonist, who, having easy-working material within reach, thus paid off a debt to Father Gabriel. It was most comfortable, convenient, and capacious as a barrack; but, as a whole, I never saw anything like it, before or since.

From a detached kitchen, on the side of the original hut, with a monstrous chimney, came a delicious smell and flare of wood-fire, accounting clearly for the excessive warmth of the fat woman cook—a rare and blessed sight—who, surrounded by male

and female assistants, was at that moment engaged in fanning herself with an old cabbage-tree hat.

A twinge of mortification shot through me as I looked down on my patched fustians, and regretted too late the snow-white ducks and sky-blue plaid shooting-jacket, which lay neglected at the bottom of a sea-chest.

The shearing was concluded. The wool of twenty thousand head had been washed, clipped, sorted, and packed, and the Clan Gabriel were gathered together with all friends and neighbours, within seventy miles, who could spare time to celebrate a feast at the house with the best garden on that side the Blue Mountains. Father Gabriel towered even among the tall Australians, but one could distinguish at a glance the British from the Colonial born of his family; slight, fair, and small-featured were the younger brood as compared with the elder. Father Gabriel had one of those faces and forms you often see in the wolds of Yorkshire; powerful, large limbed, broad chested, with rather high cheek bones, a ruddy complexion, which the Australian sun had not been able to burn out; a bold hooked nose; eyes grey, and rather larger and less cunning in expression than most men of the same stamp; hair, whiskers, and eyebrows almost grey: a bold, capacious forehead gave benevolence to a countenance which would otherwise have been chiefly distinguished, like his fellow countrymen, by acuteness. Hard work and the climate seemed to have melted every ounce of fat out of a frame that, at his age, we commonly find full and fleshy, if not unwieldy. His wife was delightful; little, plump, active, of middle age, perfectly fair, without wrinkle, and with smooth, auburn hair without a touch of grey—that kind of hair that never gets grey, and a mouth full of unspecked teeth,

an advantage which several of her married daughters could not boast. A better looking lot I never saw. The women were all clustering round a stranger cousin from England; the men, I grieve to own, just as they do in England, were gathered together discussing stock, the merits of their horses, and the price of wool. Two little boys, the eldest not ten years of age, who had been tailing cattle all day, galloped up after us—Bushmen in miniature.

As dusk came on, the room, which went clear up to the roof, rough and unfinished, was lighted with home-made dips, stuck in bottles and bark sconces.

Presently the tuning I had heard on arrival recommenced from a corner. Mr. Budge, blacksmith and clerk, the universal genius of the settlement, took up his beloved bass, which, unglued and flat, had travelled all the way from "the North Country," and recommenced the concert our presence had interrupted. Polly Gabriel, his god-child and favourite, a sweet little thing in the bloom of fifteen, tucked a violin under her chin. Bob Grundy, boot-maker and shepherd, blew away on the flageolet, while Jack Rackrow, an evergreen veteran pensioner of engineers, farmer and joiner, drew shrill notes from a home-made tin instrument, a cross between a penny-whistle and piccolo flute.

One, two, three, four reels were formed, and off we went in double quick time, for by instinct I soon joined, as by degrees did a good many, without distinction of age or station; Mother Gabriel, as active as any; Dora O'Grady, the red-headed maiden, in a red and yellow gown without shoes or stockings. Famously we jigged, thumped the floor, and snapped our fingers, and wonderfully were the steps in toe-and-heel and weave-the-blanket there and then performed, amid due shouting, while at door and

window, with large admiring eyes, the shepherds and other Bush servants looked on approvingly, as may be seen when polka is performed in some English manor-house ; the balance of surprise and admiration being, however, with our Bushmen. Then we changed to country dances—up the middle and down again ; and all the company, but two or three elders, including a little, lame, old man, with a crutch-handled stick, got in motion, and it did strike me that one or two of the outsiders joined in a sort of voluntary accompaniment at the door end of the room. When I pulled up in my turn, red and breathless, I was close to the musicians, rare birds in the Bush, and this lot right down enthusiasts. Little Polly, her eyes sparkling, her cheeks glowing, her brown curls hanging all manner of ways, cuddled her fiddle as if she loved it, and ran up and down the strings with the taperest if not the whitest fingers that ever patted butter,—lost to dancers and admirers, everything but her own music ; but, while Budge sawed away as solemnly and earnestly as if he had been blowing his own bellows, and Grundy blew as if his life depended on his exertions, Jack Rackrow found time to admire his own performance and give directions as to the figures, to which no one paid the least attention. “ I ’m blessed,” I heard one of the stockmen say, “ if I b’lieve the governor and the bishop have got such music.” And all the bystanders seemed of the same opinion, in which, indeed, I fully agreed.

All things must have an end, so did the dancing, from sheer exhaustion ; then came supper ; the table, sheets of bark laid on bushes, on which, ranged in glorious profusion, were mutton chops, broiled beef, honey, potatoes, melons, grapes, pumpkin pie, eels, parrot pie, figs, roast piglings, and dampers a yard

in diameter, serving often for bread and plates too. Jorums of tea, strong and sweet ; bowls of milk, and a cask of wine, home-made wine, formed the drinkables : rum, which on such occasions is usually introduced as a treat, being excluded by the scruples of our hosts. In compliment to me, as a stranger, a bottle of porter was uncorked, its cost exceeding old crusted Port at a Richmond dinner. When I add that every man pulled out his own clasp-knife, that only six forks could be mustered, and that no particular order was observed in the eating, I have said everything. Soon after supper the ladies retired ; the men took their smoke ; those living near saddled up, the far away ones unrolled their blankets and stretched out on the floor. Before and since I have attended balls and suppers more refined, but never so enjoyable, because it was a real luxury, no other Bush establishment having so much music or so many pretty girls for partners.

The next day a party set out to form a new station in the interior, which had been previously explored. The sheep, in two flocks of six hundred each, had gone forward two days previously. The young men having come up from Father Gabriel's out-stations, there was a great gathering. The head of the party was Harry Granby, husband of Polly Gabriel's sister Myra. The old folks had contributed fortunes for the young people in stock, and they had determined to push on quite outside the furthest stations, on ground lately discovered.

Two bullock drays were loaded with everything needed for a station. The little old lame man with the crutch-handled stick came up, riding a half-bred Timor pony, with a pair of draught bullocks, which he insisted on presenting to the young couple as regular "good uns," instead of a pair that seemed

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not quite steady. A mixed herd of six hundred head of cattle were collected in a stock-yard, to go forward under charge of Granby's brother, one of the young Gabriels, and an experienced stockman, with four volunteers; the other splitters and fencers and servants had gone with the sheep.

The strangest sight, and the prettiest, was Myra Granby on her grey mare, with a great yearling colt running alongside, all ready with blankets, tin pots, holster, and provision-bags strapped on, to march into the interior. Contrary to all precedent, a shepherd's wife, riding on one of the drays, was the only other woman. This move of Myra's created a universal outcry, but she made no answer to the last words, except cracking her stockwhip: and, looking at her firm though rosy mouth, and very decided eyebrows, it was clear that when Myra made up her mind, Harry had nothing to do but give way.

Amid the prayers of the fathers and mothers, good wishes of the young ones, a volley of old shoes from Dora and Molly the maid-servants, the reports of the bullock-drivers' whips, the shouts of the stockmen, and the barking of the cattle-dogs, the party moved off into the wilderness. To see them winding along in the distance, was almost a scene from the days of Abrahám and Lot.

As the last straggler passed over the brow of the range, "There," said Father Gabriel, "there, young gentleman, that's the way we swarm off our young bees in this country. No landlord, no rent worth speaking of, no taxes. But come, let us mount and see my farm."

The skill and industry of a North-country farmer, with a large supply of labour in his own family, applied to fertile soil, ready for the plough without clearing, under a climate without winter and without droughts,

had done wonders. The crops were splendid ; but, to an eye accustomed to good Scotch or English farming, everything seemed rude, slovenly, and unfinished. But, as the old man truly observed, " Good, neat farming, don't pay in a colony : labour is dear, and land cheap. A crop might be got out of five acres while you were stumping one acre. For the same reason, no man can make a living as a farmer who cannot work with his own hands, and get help in his own family. Gentlemen like you, sir, should keep to squatting with sheep or cattle ; and then, if you look after your men, you can do. Spend nothing you can help, and do all you can for yourself. That's the secret of Colonial success.

" I have spent more time and labour on my garden than is the custom in the colony, but then I wished to keep my family round me, and for years only hired two men ; I with my sons did all the rest. We began our garden on the same day as our hut, and we ate our own cabbage and bacon the first year."

Thus chatting, we reached an eminence, where I could look down on the wild and reclaimed land. " A lovely scene," I observed ; " how bright and clear everything comes out under these cloudless skies."

" Why, yes," said Father Gabriel, " it does look very pretty ; and perhaps you might have liked it even better the first time I saw it ; the grass breast high, full of kangaroos, and the water-holes alive with black swans and pelicans : but, pretty as it was, I can assure you it made my heart sore to think I had brought my family into such a wilderness, so lonely, surrounded by bloodthirsty savages, so far from help, and such a deal of new kind of work to do before I could make it anything like the place

where we were all reared. If my old woman had not had a good heart, and the young ones been all such hard-bitten ones and hopeful, I think I should never have pulled through. There were not many immigrants in those days, and England seemed a great deal further off than it does now. But, thank God, I would not change places now with the owner of Brancepeth Castle."

"But," said I, "you speak so fondly of Old England; you seem so glad to welcome any English face, whether from the north or the south; that I almost wonder you could ever find heart to leave home, especially as people were not crowding out as they are now, fancying fortunes are to be picked up on the beach?"

"Why, that's true—it was a wonder; I'm astonished, although I have never been sorry since my son Ralph helped me to fell the first tree; but the fact is, I came for the only reason that a man ever ought to leave his country, to my thinking—because I was going down hill fast, with a long family coming, and in an evening sitting over the fire, trying to make out what would be left after rent was paid, I used to think I could see a gaol or a workhouse in the hot coals.

"You see my family had been farmers and freeholders in the county for more than two hundred years; but my father, being a more forward and colonial-like man than the rest of his neighbours, made a good bit of money. He was fortunate enough to get some of Mr. Collings's calves, the beginning of the celebrated Durham breed, and to know their value before other people did. Then a coal-field being found near his farm, and a part of it being wanted for works, he was able to sell that for a good price, and keeping our old house, took a

lot of additional land as tenant on the V—— estate. He held at last near a thousand acres, and had all the benefit of war prices at an easy rent. It was like coining money in those days. We didn't set up to be gentlefolks, like some, but we kept on steadily. There were ten of us, but, as it happened, all girls but me, and I was the youngest but two. My eldest sisters were married off quick, being well-favoured lasses, as likewise well-portioned.

"I was five-and-twenty turned when I met my missis at Tynemouth one summer; she was a neighbour's daughter; but he being a widower, she had lived away with an aunt, in Northumberland. We soon settled to be married in the autumn, but my mother dying, put it off till the winter. Well, this death, and my being the only son, brought it about that, instead of my father stocking a farm for me, I took my wife to live with him, and took a share of his farm, and I often think that, under Providence, this was the road that led me to Australia.

"Having a fancy that way, I took special charge of the horned stock; to please my missis I had given up hunting, and so set to work to follow Mr. Collings's example, and try what could be made of the short-horns; partly, perhaps, because our neighbours laughed at the notion, and I always like to think for myself. My head herd was a Yorkshireman, by the name of Tom Birkenshaw; he had been our head carter, but having broken his ankle-bone, which set stiff lame, and so bad for travelling, he was made bull-herd.

"Tom was—indeed, I may say he is, for he don't live far off, although he's getting old now—as knowing a fellow about cattle and horses as ever walked in shoe-leather. You'll mind a little man in a blue night-cap, with a crutch-handled stick. That was

Birkenshaw. He had but two faults: he was apt to get a drop too much beer now and then, and he couldn't let the game alone. There were preserves all round us, and if he'd been content with what was found on our farm it would not have mattered so much; but that did not suit him—he must be poaching in the very midst of the preserves. Then he had two dogs that could do anything but speak, as regular poachers, and as fond of it as Tom himself was.

“Well, father warned him, and I warned and threatened, but it was no use. Go into his cottage when you would between August when the leverets are so tender, and February, you were sure to smell game, though not a bit of fur nor feather was to be seen; he used to say to me, ‘Bless your heart, master Gabriel, it’s not the beasties I care for; it’s going after them.’ His lame leg rather interfered with his sport; for before that accident, there was not a man in the county could get nigh him if he got a fair start. Well, as I told him, to make a long story short, he was caught, one moonlight night, by the earl’s gamekeeper, when he and his brindled dog Patch were enjoying themselves in a twelve-acre meadow of the Earl of D——’s; Patch driving the hares into the gins, and Birkenshaw taking them out and resetting them. The gamekeeper shot the dog from behind a hedge where he had been lying waiting, and chased my man, overtook him, and knocked him down. Tom jumped up, his blood boiling at the loss of Patch, caught the keeper a crack with a short cudgel that laid him flat, took to his heels and ran home, and told no one.

“Two hours afterwards, a party of watchers found the keeper lying where Tom had stretched him, groaning, bloody, and insensible. The next day

he recovered his senses, and by midnight poor Tom was in Durham Castle, heavily ironed. He was tried at the next assizes, and sentenced to be transported for life. It was only by very strong interest that he escaped being hanged. Birkenshaw told the judge he would sooner be hanged, and many of his friends promised that hanging could not be worse—so blind are we poor mortals to what is best for us. We agreed to take care of his wife and two little boys. Tom was taken away ironed, on the top of the coach for London. He passed through the village and our farm, and there was not a dry eye. The miners wanted to rescue him, but we persuaded them it would do no good. Years passed before we ever heard whether he was dead or alive. His poor wife soon pined away and died, and the two little boys came to us. You'd scarcely believe it, but, 'fore their father had been gone six months, I caught them and my eldest son Ralph in the hay-loft making gins for hares. You may be sure I thrashed them all well.

“Just before the war ended, when my two eldest were growing up nice boys, big enough to ride to market with me, my father and I agreed to take another large arable farm, that had been very badly done by the last tenant, on a long lease; we thought we had a good bargain, and that it would be ready by the time my son Ralph was old enough to take to it; for, although my father was getting on in years, he was as hale and as hearty as many a man of fifty. But the very week after signing the lease, as the old man was returning from Durham on his mare, that had carried him without shying or stumbling for nigh fourteen years, she slipped up in coming along a bridle-road, and threw him against a stone wall, breaking his collar-bone, and cutting

his head open ; there he lay, through a frosty night, for many hours before he was found : he lingered several weeks, but never rallied. Long as we had lived together, I seemed to have lost him just when I needed him most.

“ Before the year was out peace was signed, and down went prices. I had to pay off my sisters’ fortunes, fixed by will when wheat was at 120s. a quarter. Then came a heavy bond to pay as security, that my father had given for a relation, who had taken contracts and made great sums through the war, but ended by a great mistake. All my troubles came at once ; a coal-pit we had a heavy stake in, and which I took from my sisters, because they had married far away, burst out with fire-damp, was filled with water, and then could not be cleared. So one way or another, what with the heavy sums needed for stocking and putting in heart the new farm, my ready money all melted away. Then came, after a short gleam of sunshine, a regular fall of prices of agricultural produce. The landlords spoke fair ; they gave us an act of parliament that they said would keep corn at 80s., though even that would scarcely do for some of us ; but we dined and drank toasts, hurrahed, and went home satisfied. Meat, wool, and corn all went down ; it was quite plain that if such times continued, at the same rents, break we all must. Those that had lived fast with small capital, began to go first. But you know, sir, a farmer dies as hard as a fox or a dingoe ; he can’t shift his pivot so easy as a tradesman or a manufacturer ; and he takes a longer time to break, for the landlord, who’s the chief creditor, will wait a long time, knowing he can come in at last and sweep away all. Well, I could have managed to make a good fight with my old farm, by cutting down ex-

penses, wearing an old coat, putting my hand to the plough; but how was I to save money for the children? Besides, the other farm, with so much money sunk on it, was a regular dead weight; and my father being gone, I was obliged to leave much to a bailiff.

"Things got very black indeed; and although they talked very loud in parliament and at county meetings, I could not see any real chance of good prices.

"Well, one day who should come up with a letter of introduction from Mr. Lambton but a sun-burnt foreign-looking gentleman, 'from New South Wales,' a Mr. M——, wanting to buy a lot of good short-horns, both bulls and heifers, thorough-bred horses and Cleveland bays, and implements, to take out; and likewise to hire a good farm-bailiff, and a man to take care of his horses out. He was sent to me, as one likely to tell him where to get the best of everything. I rode about with him, sold him some stock, and naturally had a good deal of talk with him, and was surprised to find that Botany Bay, the only place we'd ever heard of, was in New South Wales. When he found by my grumbling that I was not quite satisfied, he offered to use his influence, if I would go out with my family and some labourers, to get me a grant of land where there would be scarcely a rent, and no taxes, if I would sail in the ship with his stock. He said I could, he was sure, make my fortune in ten years, and a lot more about what a country it was for cattle and sheep. Well, I didn't take much heed of it at first; I did not like the idea of leaving old England, or taking my wife and family to Botany Bay. But I told all to my wife, and she did not say much, but she listened hard.

"The Lord be thanked, my father never made a

gentleman of me; I took my turn at all farming work, from driving to ploughing, from cutting and plashing hedges to building a wheat-stack; likewise I went into our forge, and learned to make a set of horse-shoes and put them on, as well as to sharpen and mend all implements.

"I brought up my own lads the same way, and I found the use of it, and so have they.

"Well, as things got worse, I cut down all I could, worked early and late, and lived as hard nearly as my grandfather; and my wife never grumbled, or even looked sad, when I was by, but I used to see the tears running down her cheeks as she lay asleep, for we both knew there would be but one end, unless some great change took place in rents and price of corn, and that end was *ruin*. We were both thinking of what Mr. Lambton's friend had offered; but we said nothing to each other, for at that time people in the country looked on emigration and transportation as much the same thing, and Australia was thought a country of thieves and savages.

"It was a few days after I had paid my rent—I had tried to get a reduction, but the landlords of the second farm were only trustees, and said they could not do it—for the third year, the rent had come out of my capital, and I was sitting smoking a pipe, and wondering what was to become of us all, and whether Botany Bay was as good a place for a farmer as what Mr. M—— had told me, when the postboy comes up on his pony, on his way to the castle, and whistles as having a letter. He was a new postman (Bob Spurrier, that other lad, enlisted in the dragoons and was killed at Waterloo;) the lasses were all in the dairy, so I stepped out myself. Says he, 'Is there a woman here by the name of Molly

Birkenshaw, 'cause I 've a letter for her, and it's four and elevenpence, a letter from furrin parts, I take it.'

"When he said this you might have knocked me down with a feather. I knew in a moment where it was from,—the very place I had been thinking on that minute. So I stared at him a bit, and then I said, quite slow, 'There was a wench o' that name, but she's dead, but you can give me the letter, for her lads are here.'

"'Aye,' says he, 'but you must pay for it.'

"With that I snatches the letter from him, and throws him a crown piece, and off he goes, and I stood looking on it as if I was in a dream. There it was, plain enough, 'Molly Birkenshaw, Gnarled-oak Farm, Lingscroft, near Durham, England,' and stamped 'Sydney, New South Wales, Ship-letter.' Chris. Birkenshaw came in soon after with a team, and we broke it to him gently. The poor lad cried above a bit. Well, we opened the letter, and sure enough, it was from his father. I can show it you, for I keep it safe locked up; I call that letter my title-deed, for without it I should never have wonned here.

"He told how he had written several times, but his letters never came to hand, as he guessed himself. It seemed he had done well, having got assigned to a master that treated him well—he being valuable from his knowledge of cattle and horses; and that after a few years he had got his pardon, for shooting a Bushranger. About this, he said (I'll show you the letter when we get home) 'he put two balls through my hat; but I fetched him down with one of my snap shots, without putting the gun to my shoulder, as he looked round a tree. You mind, Moggy, how I used to knock the rabbits that way,

holding the gun across my knees ; but there 's no rabbits here, nor game worth speaking of, which is a great pity ; but perhaps it is all for the best.' Then he went to tell how he 'd got a fifty-acre grant and a small lot of cattle, and had made money by his wages and by attending to the great Mr. L——'s herd of breeders, and had bought grants of land from drinking fellows ; and what a good country it was for all kinds of live stock ; and what a profit wheat paid, the government wanting such a quantity of meal for the prisoners ; and how land could be had on grant by a farmer with some money ; and how drunken many of the people were, and how well sober people got on : ' for,' says he, ' I 've given up drink, Moggy, ever since I got my liberty !' Then he asked after his old friends, and even the gamekeeper, hoping he had got over that clout ; and after his old master, (that was me,) and wished Master Bowsted, a wild young gentleman that used to go poaching with Tom, might think of coming out ; and then he gave a list of prices of cattle and sheep, and wages ; and ended by saying he had sent £50, to be paid through the Durham bank, to Mister Gabriel, (that 's me,) for the passage of his wife and family ; and if he did not hear this time, he should not write no more, but give it up for a bad job. And sure enough, three days after came a notice that the money had come.

" Well, we spelled it over again and again ; the two lads wept, and so did my wife ; and I could scarcely help weeping myself, to think what a comfort it would have been to poor Moggy Birkenshaw if she had lived, and to think, too, what a help and warning this letter seemed. Well, I got on my nag, and took a turn round the farm, just to give me time to consider what or whether I should say anything

about emigrating to my wife. The time was come for me to make up my mind. Tom Birkenshaw's letter had turned the scale with *me*; but when I looked round, and saw in the distance the spires of the cathedral that had so often been a glad sign of home near, after a long absence, my heart almost failed me. The thought of a farewell for ever to the country and the county and the parish where I was born; of seeing no more the fields in which I had laboured and sported for nearly forty years, seemed indeed a draught too bitter. Then, again, I recalled my present position, sliding surely, in spite of my struggles, in spite of my clings to every twig of stay—down, down to ruin: and my heart was hardened for any change that offered fair hopes of an honest living.

“At length my mind was made up. I would speak to my wife that very evening, and find whether she would cross the seas, or fight it out with poverty at home. With this resolution I rode back, firmer in my saddle than I had been for many a day. It was dusk, and supper laid out; they were waiting for me for prayers; it was my second son Barnard's turn to read a chapter. My wife (it was not her custom) went herself, fetched the Bible, lighted a candle, and, putting her finger on a place, said to Barnard, in a voice that sounded as if she was swallowing her tears, ‘*There, read there,*’ and the boy read:—

“‘Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.’

“Then I looked at her, and with a sad and serious smile her eyes answered me, and I knew we were agreed.

"The next day we began to prepare for our long journey. Weary work it was, and painful, deciding what to take and what to sell. Many a treasure was sacrificed; old oak presses, chairs, and bedsteads, that had belonged to our family for centuries, had to go under the auctioneer's hammer. But we went at the work with a will, and cleared away wholesale. We, who were old and full grown, were sad; but the children played and enjoyed the confusion, which made us still sadder.

"Having chosen what furniture would be useful, as well as what would take up little room and sell for nothing, and made a careful muster of tools and agricultural implements, half of which turned out useless, I selected three of my finest yearling bulls, and made a barter of other stock for a cart and a blood stallion.

"The sorest trial was the day of sale, and the remarks of my friends and neighbours. No criminal was ever considered more a doomed man; and on looking back, I often wonder how I had courage to persevere. I got rid of my farms at a great sacrifice; but having made up my mind to go, I thought the sooner I was gone the better.

"The only parties who would join me in emigrating were two young men, small farmers, Granby's father and Will Blackwood, who was killed by the blacks near where we stand; he's buried by the chapel, but you can see the mounds where we covered over the savages. Budge and Grundy followed us two years afterwards. It was only those very hard up that would think of crossing the sea.

"As for the Squires they were very angry; they did not like the example set to tenants, and abused me as if I had been a deserter or a traitor. Emigration was not in fashion as it is now.

“Of friends of my own standing, one did not like the sea, another thought times would mend, another was getting ready, when his wife stopped him, and so they stayed. Out of a dozen, all came down to the workhouse or day-labour, except one, and he went to Canada and did well. Mr. M——, the gentleman from New South Wales, was delighted to hear of my going with such a useful party, and got me a cheap passage, on condition of our looking after his bulls, rams, and horses.

“We were a large party, and every one able to work except the baby; but my capital had dwindled to a few hundred pounds. Every one of my servants has done well. Bill Bouser, my head farm-servant, paid his own passage; he’s one of the richest men in the colony now. The two young Birken-shaws married two of my daughters; one of them is in Port Philip. Betty Ludlow, the dairy-maid, married my second son Barnard. Hugh Sands, my ploughman, has a nice farm on the river; you saw him last night, a dark, stout, little man; and Dolly Russell, our nurse, has married the rich Mr. N——, and lives in greater style than the governor’s lady, which she deserves, for she was as good as she was pretty.

“We sailed to London from Newcastle in a smack, and sent the stock with the men and two of my lads by land. The misery of the voyage, and the lodging in London, would almost have turned us back if it had not been too late. Only my wife never gave in; and depend upon it, sir, in emigrating, a wife of the right sort is half the battle.

“We were five months from London to Port Jackson, calling in at the Cape for water and fresh provisions, but we only lost one bull. We were ready to kiss the ground when we landed. My

third son George took a fancy to the sea; and though he stayed at home until we were settled, he went off, and now commands a whaler out of Sydney. I found it best to sell my live stock, for which I got great prices. Mr. M——'s letters put me pretty right; but within a week of landing, Tom Birkenshaw limped into our lodgings. We had written to him when we made up our minds, but the letter did not arrive much sooner than ourselves. Tom was much older, worn and gray, with downcast look, but still something that gave the idea of money in both pockets, and he rode a tidy nag. The meeting between him and his orphan lads was a very moving sight. It seemed curious that times should so turn round, that my best friend should be my herd, and he a prisoner too. I had influence to get a good grant, and Birkenshaw put me up to what land to ask for, and what official gentleman to conciliate by letting him have one of my horses on his own terms. Birkenshaw bought my team of oxen and waggons; I had a tent; he engaged me my hands, a bullock-driver, a stockman, and two others, all from our neighbourhood, all prisoners.

“I came down to this place when there was not a settler within a hundred miles, and literally pitched my tent, a three-poled one, on the river-side. Having been accustomed to find house and outbuildings, fences, fields, gardens, besides shops for all clothes and implements, ready to our hands, we had every thing to make, and very little to make it with. But I pulled off my coat and began, and for fifteen years, from daylight to dusk, never left off for six days a week, besides teaching the children in the evening, when they were not too sleepy to listen to me. After fifteen years, I found I could rest a little, and

now I only give a hand's turn at harvest or shearing time. But then I have had six more children born to me, besides grandchildren; and in this country truly we may say with the Psalmist, 'Children are an heritage of the Lord. As arrows in the hand of the strong man, so are children; happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them,' for food grows faster than mouths, and they are well earning their worth, when at home they would want a maid to look after them.

"It is true I have been very fortunate; there will never be such times again for making money—since the free grants of land and the assignment of prisoners have both been done away with. Then my land has always been free from drought, and is right down good land, needing little work for clearing; although as for that, you may take my word, there is more good land than the squatters like to own. Why, I have had four sets of servants that have done well, besides a lot of idle drinking fellows. There was my first bullock-driver, Frank Fetlock; he was transported for stealing corn to feed his master's horses; when he was before the magistrates, they offered to let him off if he would enlist, as he was a very fine-looking fellow. He often laughed about it, saying what a good job it was he wouldn't consent, although he rued his answer when first sent to the hulks for transportation. Frank was an ingenious fellow, always at work on straw hats, or stock-whips, or something, when not busy for me. When he left, he had a mare, a few head of stock, and a little money saved up to begin with. Yorkshire-like, he was a rare hand at chopping and swapping, and now he is one of the richest men in the district. Then there was Tom Nash, a stockman of mine; he came out as groom to Colonel I——, quite a fine

gentleman flunkey when he arrived, a cockney too ; he threw up his livery, because he saw where money was to be made ; gave up all expenses, saved money, and is a squatter now, with perhaps as fine a stock as any in the colony. Those of my old neighbours from Gnarled-oak that have come out and laid down to work have done well ; go where you will, the hard-working man with a large family is thriving. But then there are failures. Farmer Cudworth had 3000*l.* when he landed ; he was always grumbling, hated the country, hated the people, and made them hate him ; spent as much money on clearing and fencing twenty acres as should have gone to crop a hundred ; would stick to all his old country notions, lost his money, took to drinking, and died. Squire Brand's son came to me with a letter of introduction ; he had 5000*l.*, would not wait to learn anything, bought sheep the Sydney bank had a mortgage on—a regular bad lot ; then left all to his overseer while he was dancing at the governor's balls, playing the fashionable, and made a complete failure ; he went home. And so you see, sir, the long and short of it is, that for a man that can work himself this is a famous country ; and likewise money is to be made by carefully laying out money in stock and waiting for the increase ; but as a general rule, the money made by gentlemen who have not much capital, and have not been accustomed to soil their hands, is by saving—living being cheap, and neither shop nor fashions in the Bush to tempt into spending money idly. I could tell a score of stories about settlers I've known, of all sorts, that have done well, and that have made a regular mull of it. Fair words and hard work will carry you through ; it's better to say *come* than *go*, if you want work done in the colony. There was young C——. But

what 's that by the fallen gum-tree ? As I live, there's a dingoe at a sick ewe. Loo Boomer, Loo Bounder ! at him, good dogs !" The hounds caught sight just as master Dingoe began to steal across the plain, just like a great hill fox, only, instead of carrying his brush gallantly in the air, it was tucked miserably between his legs ; away went the hounds at full speed ; we followed, leaping fallen trees and cracks, the old man standing up in his stirrup, with his hat in his hand, cheering the dogs at the top of his voice : after a sharp burst, just as master Dingoe was getting into a scrubby thicket, Boomer turned him, and Bounder pulled him down, not without receiving a grab that nearly cut off his fore leg ; in one minute my knife laid the brute's throat open. This ended our gossip for that day, as I suspect Father Gabriel was rather ashamed that old sporting instincts, and hatred of the Bushman's curse—the native dog, should have made him forget his position as an elder at Gabriel's chapel.

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CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTMAS-DAY IN THE BUSH.

It was the first month at a new station on the Murrumbidgee that I went up to help Jack Martyn to establish. Jack was a cousin of my early friend Phil. Paginton, we used to call him Betty Martyn, because before he grew Colonial he would black his boots and wear gloves. He was a capital fellow, fourth son of a parson with eight children and £300 a-year, and an Irish Dean's daughter for a wife. Jack had been sent out in a hurry, on being suspected of an inclination to demean his family by marrying the very pretty daughter of a rich pawnbroker, at three days' sight, to the intense horror of his mother and his aunt, Lady O'Leathery, to produce a second edition of the dangers between the matrimonial Scylla and Charybdis.

It was Christmas eve, and hotter than usual at that time of year; we sat opposite each other in the lightest possible costume, dusty and rather disconsolate.

"Well, Jack," said I, "this is a pleasant look out for Christmas-day,—no dray up, our last flour gone to-day, and our last sugar melted away last week; that disgusting emu has eaten up all the pumpkins and melons, so we may dine to-morrow on tea *au naturel*, and the remains of the last cask of salt beef; unless you prefer to kill a bit of fresh, and eat it without damper, salt or pickles. No doubt the dray's hard and fast in some gully, or safe on one

wheel by the Sugar-loaf Range, and Red Robin and his mate, if they are the sensible fellows I take them to be, are now picking the plums and weighing out the flour for their Christmas pudding."

"Or, perhaps," put in Jack, "amiably dividing our stores with a party of Bushrangers. A pleasant prospect, truly, for a man who has ridden four hundred miles to spend his Christmas-day with an old chum—no dinner, no books, no tobacco. It almost makes one wish to be sitting wigged, gowned, and briefless, in the back benches of the Queen's Bench, drawing caricatures; or reading three services a-day to a Low Church congregation, upon fifty pounds a-year."

"A bright thought strikes me: let us ride over to that Devonshire man's station,—I mean the man with the pretty daughters. There's a short cut across the range, Red Robin made out the other day, that won't make it above thirty-five miles, instead of a hundred and twenty, by swimming one creek and climbing over one awkward bit of hill work. We'll start at sunrise, and do it comfortably by ten o'clock, if we can only make out the bearing right. Our but too true excuse—the missing dray—is a safe card for a dinner, if not a dance and a pleasant day or two."

"Agreed," said I.

By day-break we were off, combed and trimmed, in the blue and red Jerseys, belts, trowsers, and broad-brimmed hats, that form the picturesque costume of the Bush, on our best horses, over hill and dale and plain, through a broad creek, with a quarter of a mile's swimming, guided by Bushman's signs and instincts. About ten o'clock we struck the river, and running it down, soon came where it swelled to a broad lake or water-hole before the Devonshire man's station.

We did not know his name, but rode up confidently, according to the custom of the country.

"Hurrah," cried Jack, "no starvation here: there's a six-pair oxen dray unloading, by a whole generation of youngers; sugar-plums in plenty: and look at the black fellow grinding away at the hand-mill—how fat the rascal looks! Well, we've reached the land of plenty this time."

"Why you see," I put in, "in this country all the rules go by contraries. It is Christmas-day, and, instead of frost and snow, it is a burning sun and green leaves we are perspiring under. Instead of a skate, I am thinking of a swim; and in the same way, while in old England, very often, it's the more mouths, the less to eat; here, as every mouth has a pair of hands under it, the more mouths, the more food. So you see, Jack, while you and I, with a balance at the bank to start with, often have to put up with lenten fare, this hard-worker has contrived to make comforts we can't buy."

"How be 'ee, gentleman," said a voice in a strong Devonshire accent, as the owner came up alongside them, mounted on an ugly, large headed stock-horse, which had stolen over the soft ground unheard during their conversation. He was a little slim man, with thin gray hair hanging long under his broad-brimmed hat, round an intelligent face, burned a deep brown; he sat his horse awkwardly, with long stirrups, his toes pointing down and his bridle-hand poked out, like most men who have only taken to horsemanship late in life. But he wore an air of content, self-satisfaction, and well-to-do-ism, that bespoke, at a glance, a man with whom the world went well.

"Have 'ee come var?" asked the host.

"From the next station," said Bullar.

"Zo, we be neabours, be us?" he continued. "Well, I'm cruel glad to zee 'ee. Here, Bat, take the gentlemen's horses and put 'em in the paddock!"

Bartholomew, a wild Indian-looking urchin, about two feet high, in a kilt composed of a Jersey strapped round his middle, forthwith clambered upon the thorough-bred—how, it is impossible to say, but something after the manner of a monkey ascending a camel. With a cluck, and a crack of his miniature stockwhip, the boy sent the big horse off at a swing gallop, and slap over the fence of the paddock. Returning as calmly as if he had been doing the most proper and natural thing in the world, young Flibbertigibbet observed, "Your horse don't jump amiss, stranger, though I don't think much of the big uns in a general way."

"Get away with 'ee, you young scamp," cried the grandfather; so then we all went into the cottage.

Great were the preparations. Green boughs and flowers adorned the walls and roof, in brilliant yet imperfect imitation of holly-boughs and mistletoe.

The hostess, a handsome, middle-aged woman, had given up active service to a crowd of daughters, granddaughters, neighbours, and friends, who surrounded her. She sat at ease in an Indian cane chair, until she saw and came forward to greet the strangers.

"Who could have thought," observed Martyn, "that it would have been possible to be so comfortable in the Bush!"

A great shout of "Here comes Aunt Mary and Uncle Ralph!" brought every one out into the verandah, and slowly trolling up to the door came a

high-wheeled dog-cart, in which sat, beside the driver, a fair-haired young Australian, of the true colonial type. Aunt Mary was a pretty woman, in a fashionable light mourning bonnet. Her parasol looked not a little incongruous and droll amid such wild scenery. Two varmint little boys, in sky-blue plaids and kilts, were perched behind the dray. "Here we are," cried Aunt Mary's husband; "did the last hundred miles in two days—not bad work for Bush roads. Now, young ones, who'll help to see what we've brought from town?" There was a tremendous rush at the boot of the dog-cart. A cry of "Uncle Dick and Aunt Sally" made a slight diversion; but, as these new comers came on horseback, and brought nothing but a few head of game, the dog-cart proved the more attractive to the young ones. By this time guests dropped in thick and threefold.

It is a rather degrading confession for poor human nature, but Christmas-day, anywhere, would be very blank without the eating and drinking. This is especially so in the Bush, where there are no old associations to fall back upon. So our friends, leaving the relations to exchange news, walked about sniffing the various delightful odours that arose from the detached kitchen, where an old woman and a sailor cook quarrelled and worked away with extraordinary unanimity.

Instead of romantic, sentimental confidences, the conversation of our two young squatters ran on more substantial topics:—"By Jove, Barnard, *did* you see the sucking pig?"

"No, but I spied the pudding! It fills the largest copper. Did you hear the hutkeeper asking for a shirt-sleeve to boil the men's dumplings in?"

"No; but I saw him walking down to the servants' huts with a great side of beef."

"Well, we have dropped into clover; but what a pretty girl! Is she one of the daughters?"

At length, as the sun was descending, dinner-hour arrived; it having been deferred some time, much to the ire of the cooks, in order to give every expected guest a chance.

We sat down a tremendous party, with no end of barrel ends and planks for tables, besides detached pic-nics.

Among the guests were one family of half-a-dozen, who came in a dray drawn by six pair of North Devons, consisting of Mr. John Brand, his wife, two sons, and two daughters. The youngest, Jane, a perfect cherry-checked delicate darling, with whom Jack Martyn forthwith fell in love, and put to sad confusion, by trying to make out who she was related to in Devonshire, for he took it for granted, poor deluded man, that such hands, feet, and complexion were signs of good blood. Before many hours were over, I learned the story of our friend the father of the pretty Jane, and here it is given in contrast to our Australian Christmas.

THE STORY OF JOHN BRAND.

In the year 1832, on the 24th of December, one of those clear bright days that sometimes supersede the regular snowy sleety Christmas weather, a large ship lay off Plymouth; the Blue Peter flying from her mast-head, quarters of beef hanging from her mizzen-booms, and strings of cabbages from her stern-rails; her decks crowded with coarsely-clad blue-nosed passengers, and lumbered with boxes, barrels, hen-coops, spars, and chain-cables. The wind was rising with a hollow, dreary sound. Boats were hurrying to and fro between the vessel and the

beach, where stood excited groups of old people and young children. The hoarse impatient voices of officers issuing their commands were mingled with the shrill wailing of women on the deck and the shore.

It was the emigrant ship, "Cassandra," bound for Australia during the period of the "bounty" system, when emigration recruiters, stimulated by patriotism and a handsome percentage, rushed frantically up and down the country, earnestly entreating "healthy married couples" and single souls, of either sex, to accept a free passage to "a land of plenty." The English labourers had not then discovered that Australia was a country where masters were many and servants scarce. In spite of poverty and poorhouse fare, few of the John Bull family could be induced to give heed to flaming placards they could not read, or inspiring harangues they could not understand. The admirable education which in 1832, at intervals of seven days, was distributed in homœopathic doses among the agricultural olive branches of England, did not include modern geography, even when reading and writing were imparted. If a stray Sunday School scholar did acquire a faint notion of the locality of Canaan, he was never permitted to travel as far as the British Colonies.

To the ploughman out of employ, Canaan, Canada, and Australia, were all "*furrin parts*;" he did not know the way to them; but he knew the way to the poorhouse, so took care to keep within reach of it.

Thus it came to pass that the charterers of the good ship "Cassandra" were grievously out in their calculations; and failing to fill with English, were obliged to make up their complement with Irish; who, having nothing to fall back upon but the charity

of the poor to the poorer, are always ready to go anywhere for a daily meal.

The ships from Cork had transferred their ragged, weeping, laughing, fighting cargoes; the last stray groups of English had been collected from the western counties; the Government officers had cleared and passed the ship. With the afternoon tide two hundred helpless, ignorant, destitute souls were to bid farewell to their native land.

The delays consequent on miscalculating the emigrating tastes of England had retarded until mid-winter a voyage which should have been commenced in autumn.

In one of the shore-boats sat a portly man—evidently neither an emigrant nor a sailor—wrapped in a great coat and comforters; his broad-brimmed beaver secured from the freezing blast by a coloured bandana, tied under the chin of a fat whiskerless face. This portly personage was Mr. Joseph Lobbit, proprietor of "The Shop," farmer, miller, and chairman of the vestry of the rich rural parish of Duxmoor.

At Duxmoor, the chief estate was in Chancery, the manor-house in ruins, the lord of it an outlaw, and the other landed proprietors absentees, or in debt; a curate preached, buried, married, and baptized, for the health of the rector compelled him to pass the summer in Switzerland and the winter in Italy; so Mr. Lobbit was almost the greatest, as he was certainly the richest, man in the parish.

Except that he did not care for any one but himself, and did not respect any one who had not plenty of money, he was not a bad sort of man. He had a jolly hearty way of talking and shaking hands, and slapping people on the back; so that, until you began to count money with him, he seemed a very pleasant liberal fellow. He was fond of money, but more

fond of importance, and therefore worked as zealously at parish business as he did at his own farm, shop, and mill. He centred the whole powers of the vestry in his own person, and would have been beadle, too, if it had been possible. He appointed the master and matron of the workhouse, who were relations of his wife; supplied all the rations and clothing for "the house;" and fixed the prices in full vestry (viz. himself, and the clerk, his cousin) assembled. He settled all questions of out-of-door relief, and tried hard, more than once, to settle the rate of wages too.

Ill-natured people did say that those who would not work on Master Lobbit's farm, at *his* wages, stood a very bad chance if they wanted anything from the parish, or came for the doles of blankets, coals, red and linsey-woolsey petticoats, which, under the provisions of the tablets in Duxmoor Church, are distributed every Christmas. Of course Mr. Lobbit supplied these gifts, as chief shopkeeper, and dispensed them, as senior and perpetual churchwarden. Lobbit gave capital dinners; plenty smoked on his board, and pipes of negro-head with jorums of gin punch followed without stint.

The two attorneys dined with him—and were glad to come, for he had always money to lend on good security, and his punch was unexceptionable. So did two or three bull-frog farmers, very rich and very ignorant. The doctor and curate came occasionally; they were poor, and in his debt at "The Shop," therefore bound to laugh at his jokes—which were not so bad, for he was no fool; so that, altogether, Mr. Lobbit had reason to believe himself a very popular man.

But there was—where is there not?—a black drop in his overflowing cup of prosperity.

He had a son, whom he intended to make a gentleman; whom he hoped to see married to some lady of good family, installed in the Manor House of Duxmoor (if it should be sold cheap at the end of the Chancery suit), and established as the squire of the parish. But Robert Lobbit had no taste for learning and a strong taste for drinking, which his father's customers did their best to encourage. Old Lobbit was decent in his private habits; but, as he made money whenever he could to advantage, he was always surrounded by a levée of scamps, of all degrees—some agents and assistants, some borrowers, and would-be borrowers. Young Lobbit found it easier to follow the example of his father's companions than to follow his father's advice. He was as selfish and as greedy as his father, without being so agreeable or hospitable. In the school-room he was a dunce, in the play-ground a tyrant and bully; no one liked him; but, as he had plenty of money, many courted him.

As a last resource his father sent him to Oxford, whence, after a short residence, he was expelled. He arrived at home drunk and in debt, without having lost one bad habit, or made one respectable friend. From that period he lived a sot, a village rake, the king of the tap-room, and the patron of a crowd of blackguards, who drank his beer and his health, hated him for his insolence, and cheated him of his money.

Yet Joseph Lobbit loved his son, and tried not to believe the stories good-natured friends told of him.

Another trouble fell upon the prosperous churchwarden. On the north side of the parish, just outside the boundaries of Duxmoor Manor, there had been, in the time of the Great Civil Wars, a large number of small freehold farmers—each with from

forty to five acres of land; the smaller, fathers had divided amongst their progeny; the larger had descended to eldest sons by force of primogeniture. Joseph Lobbit's father had been one of these small freeholders. A right of pasture on an adjacent common was attached to these little freeholds; so, what with geese and sheep, and a cow or so, even the poorest proprietor, with the assistance of harvest work, managed to make a living, up to the time of the last war. War prices made land valuable, and the common was inclosed; but, though a share went to the little freeholders, and sons and daughters were hired, at good wages, while the inclosure was going on—the loss of the pasture for stock, and the fall of prices at the peace, sealed their fate. John Lobbit, our portly friend's father, succeeded to his little estate of twenty acres, by the death of his elder brother, in the time of best war prices, after he had passed some years as a shopman in a great seaport. His first use of it was to sell it, and set up a shop in Duxmoor, to the great scandal of his farmer neighbours. When John slept with his fathers, Joseph, having succeeded to the shop and savings, began to buy land and lend money. Between shop credit to the five-acred, and mortgages to the forty-acred men, with a little luck in the way of the useful sons of the freeholders being constantly enlisted for soldiers, impressed for sailors, or convicted for poaching offences, in the course of years, Joseph Lobbit became possessed, not only of his paternal freehold, but, acre by acre, of all his neighbours' holdings, to the extent of something like five hundred acres. The original owners vanished; the stout and young departed, and were seen no more; the old and decrepit were received and kindly housed in the workhouse. Of course it could not have been

part of Mr. Lobbit's bargain to find them board and lodging for the rest of their days at the parish expense. A few are said to have drunk themselves to death; but this is improbable, for the cider in that part of the country is extremely sour, so that it is more likely they died of colic.

There was, however, in the very centre of the cluster of freeholds which the parochial dignitary had so successfully acquired, a small fertile plot of five acres with a right of road through the rest of the property. The possessor of this was a sturdy fellow, John Brand by name, who was neither to be coaxed nor bullied into parting with his patrimony.

John Brand was an only son, a smart little fellow, a capital thatcher, a good hand at cobhouse building—in fact a handy man. Unfortunately, he was as fond of pleasure as his betters. He sang a comic song, till peoples' eyes ran over, and they rolled on their seats; he handled a single-stick very tidily; and among the light weights was not to be despised as a wrestler. He always knew where a hare was to be found; and when the fox-hounds were out, to hear his view-halloo did your heart good. These tastes were expensive; so that when he came into his little property, although he worked with tolerable industry, and earned good wages for that part of the country, he never had a shilling to the fore, as the Irish say. If he had been a prudent man, he might have laid by something very snug, and defied Mr. Lobbit to the end of his days.

It would take too long to tell all Joseph Lobbit's ingenious devices after plain, plump offers, to buy Brand's acres had been refused. John Brand declined a loan to buy a cart and horse: he refused to take credit for a new hat, umbrella, and waistcoat, after losing his money at Bidecot fair. He went on

steadily slaving at his bit of land, doing all the best thatching and building jobs in the neighbourhood, spending his money and enjoying himself without getting into any scrapes, until Mr. Joseph Lobbit, completely foiled, began to look on John Brand as a personal enemy.

Just when John and his neighbours were rejoicing over the defeat of the last attempt of the jolly parochial, an accident occurred which upset all John's prudent calculations. He fell in love. He might have married Dorothy Poulson, the blacksmith's daughter—an only child, with better than two hundred pounds in the Bank, and a good business—a virtuous, good girl, too, as thin as a hurdle, with a skin like a nutmeg-grater, and rather a bad temper. But, instead of that, to the surprise of every one, he went and married Carry Hutchins, the daughter of Widow Hutchins, one of the little freeholders bought out by Mr. Lobbit, who died, poor old soul, the day after she was carried into the workhouse, leaving Carry and her brother Tom destitute—that is to say, destitute of goods, money, or credit, but not of common sense, good health, good looks, and power of earning wages.

Carry was nearly a head taller than John, with a face like a ripe pear. He had to buy her wedding gown and everything else. He bought them at Lobbit's shop. Tom Hutchins—he was fifteen years old—a tall spry lad, accepted five shillings from his brother-in-law, hung a small bundle on his bird-nesting stick, and set off to walk to Bristol, to be a sailor. He was never heard of any more at Duxmoor.

At first all went well. John left off going to wakes and fairs except on business; stuck to his trades; brought his garden into good order, and

worked early and late, when he could spare time, at his two little fields, while his wife helped him famously. If they had had a few pounds in hand, they would have had "land and beeves."

But the first year twins came—a boy and girl; and the next another girl, and then twins again, and so on. Before Mrs. Brand was thirty, she had nine hearty, healthy children, with a fair prospect of plenty more; while John was a broken man, soured, discontented, hopeless. No longer did he stride forth eagerly to his work, after kissing mother and babies; no longer did he hurry home to put a finishing stroke to the potato patch, or broad-cast his oat crop; no longer did he set whistling and telling stories of bygone feats at the fireside, while mending some wooden implement of his own, or making one for a neighbour. Languid and moody, he lounged to his tasks with round shoulders and slouching gait; spoke seldom—when he did, seldom kindly. His children, except the youngest, feared him, and his wife scarcely opened her lips, except to answer.

A long, hard, severe winter, and a round of typhus fever, which carried off two children, finished him. John Brand was beaten, and obliged to sell his bit of land. He had borrowed money on it from the lawyer; while laid up with fever, he had silently allowed his wife to run up a bill at "The Shop." When strong enough for work, there was no work to be had. Lobbit saw his opportunity, and took it. John Brand wanted to buy a cow, he wanted seed, he wanted to pay the doctor, and to give his boys clothes to enable them to go to service. He sold his land for what he thought would do all this, and leave a few pounds in hand. He attended to sign the deed and receive money; when, instead of the balance of twenty-five pounds he had expected, he

received one pound ten shillings, and a long lawyer's bill *receipted*.

He did not say much; for poor countrymen don't know how to talk to lawyers; but he went towards home like a drunken man; and, not hearing the clatter of a horse behind him that had run away, was knocked down, run over, and picked up with his collar-bone and two ribs broken.

The next day he was delirious; in the course of a fortnight he came to his senses, lying on a workhouse bed. Before he could rise from the workhouse bed, not a stick or stone had been left to tell where the cottage of his fathers had stood for more than two hundred years, and Mr. Joseph Lobbit had obtained, in auctioneering phrase, a magnificent estate of five hundred acres within a ring fence.

John Brand stood up at length, a ruined, desperate, dangerous man, pale, and weak, and even humble. He said nothing; the fever seemed to have tamed every limb—every feature—except his eyes, which glittered like an adder's when Mr. Lobbit came to talk to him. Lobbit saw it, and trembled in his inmost heart, yet was ashamed of being afraid of a *pauper*!

About this time Swing fires made their appearance in the country, and the principal Insurance Companies refused to insure farming stock—to the consternation of Mr. Lobbit, for he had lately begun to suspect that among Mr. Swing's friends he was not very popular; yet he had some thousand pounds' worth of corn-stacks in his own yards and those of his customers.

John Brand, almost convalescent, was anxious to leave the poor-house, while the master, the doctor, and every official seemed in a league to keep him

there and make him comfortable, although a short time previously the feeling had been quite different.

But the old rector of Duxmoor having died at the early age of sixty-six, in spite of his care for his health, had been succeeded by a man who was not content to leave his duties to deputies; all the parish affairs underwent a keen criticism, and John and his large family came under investigation. His story came out. The new rector pitied and tried to comfort him; but his soothing words fell on deaf ears. The only answer he could get from John was, "A hard life while it lasts, sir, and a pauper's grave, a pauper widow, pauper children; parson, while this is all you can offer John Brand, preaching to him is of no use."

With the wife the clergyman was more successful. Hope and belief are planted more easily in the hearts of women than of men, for adversity softens the one and hardens the other. The rector was not content with exhorting the poor; he applied to the rich Joseph Lobbit on behalf of John Brand's family, and as the rector was not only a truly Christian priest, but a gentleman of good family and fortune, the parochial ruler was obliged to hear and to heed.

Bland and smooth, almost pathetic, was Joseph Lobbit: he was "heartily sorry for the poor man and his large family; should be happy to offer him and his wife permanent employment on his Hill farm, as well as two of the boys and one of the girls."

The eldest son and daughter, the first twins, had been for some time in respectable service. John would have nothing to do with Mr. Lobbit.

While this discussion was pending, the news of a

ship at Plymouth waiting for emigrants reached Duxmoor.

The parson and the great shopkeeper were observed in a long warm conference in the rectory garden, which ended in their shaking hands, and the rector proceeding with rapid strides to the poor-house.

The same day, the lately established girls' school was set to work sewing garments of all sizes, as well as the females of the rector's family. A week afterwards there was a stir in the village; a waggon moved slowly away, laden with a father, mother, and large family, and a couple of pauper orphan girls. Yes, it was true; John and Carry Brand were going to "furrin parts," "to be made slaves on." The women cried, and so did the children, from imitation. The men stared. As the emigrants passed the Red Lion there was an attempt at a cheer from two tinkers; but it was a failure; no one joined in. So, staring and staring, the men stood until the waggon crept round the turn of the lane and over the bridge, out of sight; then bidding the "wives" go home and be hanged to 'em, those that had twopence, went in to spend it at the Red Lion, and those who had not went in to see the others drink, and talk over John Brand's "bouldness," and abuse Muster Lobbit quietly, so that no one in top-boots should hear them;—for they were poor ignorant people in Duxmoor—they had no one to teach them, or to care for them, and after the fever, and the long hard winter, they cared little for their own flesh and blood, still less for their neighbours. So John Brand was forgotten almost before he was out of sight.

By the road-waggon which the Brands joined

when they reached the highway, it was a three days' journey to Plymouth.

But, although they were gone, Mr. Lobbit did not feel quite satisfied; he felt afraid lest John should return and do him some secret mischief. He wished to see him on board ship, and fairly under sail.

Thus it was that, contrary to all precedent, Mr. Lobbit left his shopman to settle the difficult case of credit with his Christmas customers, and with his best horse made his way to Plymouth; and now, for the first time in his life, floated on salt water.

With many grunts and groans he climbed the ship's side; not being as great a man at Plymouth as at Duxmoor, no chair was lowered to receive his portly person. The mere fact of having to climb up a rope ladder from a rocking boat on a breezy, freezing day, was not calculated to give comfort or confident feelings to an elderly gentleman. With some difficulty, not without broken shins, amid the sarcastic remarks of groups of wild Irishmen, and the squeaks of barefooted children—who, not knowing his awful parochial character, tumbled about Mr. Lobbit's legs in a most impertinently familiar manner—he made his way to the captain's cabin, and there transacted some mysterious business with the Emigration Agent over a prime piece of mess beef and a glass of Madeira. The Madeira warmed Mr. Lobbit. The captain assured him positively that the ship would sail with the evening tide. That assurance removed a heavy load from his breast: he felt like a man who had been performing a good action, and almost cheated himself into believing that he had been spending *his own* money in charity; so, at the end of the second bottle, he willingly chimed in with

the broker's proposal to go down below and see how the emigrants were stowed, and have a last look at "his lot."

Down the steep ladder they stumbled into the misery of a "bounty" ship. A long, dark gallery, on each side of which were ranged the berths—narrow shelves open to every prying eye—where, for four months, the inmates were to be packed, like herrings in a barrel, without room to move, almost without air to breathe; the mess table, running far aft the whole distance between the masts, left little room for passing, and that little was encumbered with all manner of boxes, packages, and infants crawling about like rabbits in a warren.

The groups of emigrants were characteristically employed. The Irish "coshering," or gossiping; for, having little or no baggage to look after, they had little care; but, lean and ragged, monopolised almost all the good humour of the ship. Acute cockneys, a race fit for every change, hammering, whistling, screwing, making all snug in their berths; tidy mothers, turning with despair from alternate and equally vain attempts to collect their numerous children out of danger, and to pack the necessaries of a room into the space of a small cupboard, wept and worked away. Here, a ruined tradesman, with his family, sat at the table, dinnerless, having rejected the coarse, tough salt meat in disgust: there, a half starved group fed heartily on rations from the same cask, luxuriated over the allowance of grog, and the idea of such a good meal daily. Songs, groans, oaths; crying, laughing, complaining, hammering, and fiddling combined to produce a chaos of strange sounds; while thrifty wives, with spectacles on nose, mended their husbands' breeches, and unthrifty ones scolded.

Amid this confusion, under the authoritative guidance of the second mate, Mr. Lobbit made his way, inwardly calculating how many poachers, pauper refractories, Whiteboys, and Captain Rocks, were about to benefit Australia by their talents, until he reached a party which had taken up its quarters as far as possible from the Irish, in a gloomy corner near the stern. It consisted of a sickly, feeble woman, under forty, but worn, wasted, retaining marks of former beauty in a pair of large, dark, speaking eyes, and a well-carved profile, who was engaged in nursing two chubby infants, evidently twins, while two little things just able to walk, hung at her skirts; a pale, thin boy, nine or ten years old, was mending a jacket; an elder brother, as brown as a berry, fresh from the fields, was playing dolefully on a hemlock flute. The father, a little round-shouldered man, was engaged in cutting wooden buttons from a piece of hard wood with his pocket-knife; when he caught sight of Mr. Lobbit he hastily pulled off his coat, threw it into his berth, and turning his back, worked away vigorously at the stubborn bit of oak he was carving.

"Hallo, John Brand, so here you are at last," cried Mr. Lobbit; "I've broken my shins, almost broken my neck, and spoilt my coat with tar and pitch, in finding you out. Well, you're quite at home, I see: twins all well? both pair of them? How do you find yourself, Missis?"

The pale woman sighed and cuddled her babies—the little man said nothing, but sneered, and made the chips fly faster.

"You're on your way now to a country where twins are no object: your passage is paid, and you've only got now to pray for the good gentlemen that have given you a chance of earning an honest living."

No answer.

"I see them all here except Mary, the young lady of the family. Pray has she taken rue, and determined to stay in England after all; I expected as much—"

As he spoke, a young girl, in the neat dress of a parlour servant, came out of the shade.

"Oh! you are there, are you, Miss Mary? So you have made up your mind to leave your place and Old England to try your luck in Australia; plenty of husbands there, ha, ha!"

The girl blushed, and sat down to sew at some little garments. Fresh, rosy, neat, she was as great a contrast to her brother, the brown ragged plough-boy, as he was to the rest of the family, with their flabby, bleached complexions.

There was a pause: the mate having done his duty by finding the parochial dignitary's protégées, had slipped away to more important business; a chorus of sailors "yo heave ho-ing" at a chain cable had ceased, and for a few moments, by common consent, silence seemed to have taken possession of the long dark gallery of the hold.

Mr. Lobbit was rather put out by the silence, and no answers; he did not feel so confident as when crowing on his own dung-hill, in Duxmoor; he had a vague idea that some one might steal behind him in the dark, knock his hat over his eyes, and pay off old scores with a hearty kick: but parochial dignity prevailed, and clearing his throat with a "hem," he began again—

"John Brand, where's your coat?—what are you shivering there for, in your sleeves?—what have you done with the excellent coat generously presented to you by the parish—a coat that cost, as

per contract, fourteen shillings and fourpence—you have not dared to sell it, I hope?"

"Well, Master Lobbit, and if I did, the coat was my own, I suppose?"

"What, sir?"

The little man quailed; he had tried to pluck up his spirit, but the blood did not flow fast enough. He went to his berth and brought out the coat.

It was certainly a curious colour, a sort of yellow brown, the cloth shrunk and cockled up, and the metal buttons turned a dingy black.

Mr. Lobbit raved; "a new coat entirely spoiled, what had he done to it?" and as he raved, he warmed, and felt himself at home again, Deputy Acting Chairman of the Duxmoor Vestry. But the little man, instead of being frightened, grew red, lost his humble mien, stood up, and at length, when his tormenter paused for breath, looked him full in the face, and cried, "D—— your coat!—d—— you! d—— all the parochials of Duxmoor! What have I done with your coat? Why I've dyed it; I've dipped it in a tan-yard; I was not going to carry your livery with me. I mean to have the buttons off before I'm an hour older. Gratitude you talk of;—thanks you want, you old hypocrite, for sending me away. I'll tell you what sent me,—it was that poor wench and her twins, and a letter from the office, saying they would not insure your ricks, while lucifer-matches are so cheap. Ay, you may stare—you wonder who told me that; but I can tell you more. Who is it that writes so like his father the bank can't tell the difference?"

Mr. Lobbit turned pale.

"Be off!" said the little man; "plague us no more. You have eaten me up with your usury;

you've got my cottage and my bit of land ; you've made paupers of us all, except that dear lass, and the one lad, and you'd well-nigh made a convict of me. But never mind. This will be a cold, drear Christmas to us, and a merry fat one to you ; but perhaps the Christmas may come when Master Joseph Lobbit would be glad to change places with poor ruined John Brand. I am going where I am told that sons and daughters like mine are better than 'silver, yea, than fine gold.' I leave you rich on the poor man's inheritance and poor man's flesh and blood. You have a son and daughter that will revenge me. 'Cursed are they that remove landmarks, and devour the substance of the poor !' "

While this, one of the longest speeches that John Brand was ever known to make, was being delivered, a little crowd had collected, who, without exactly understanding the merits of the case, had no hesitation in taking side with their fellow passenger, the poor man with the large family. The Irish began to inquire if the stout gentleman was a tithe-proctor or a driver ? _ Murmurs of a suspicious character arose, in the midst of which, in a very hasty, undignified manner, Mr. Lobbit backed out, climbed up to the deck with extraordinary agility, and, without waiting to make any complaints to the officers of the ship, slipped down the side into a boat, and never felt himself safe, until called to his senses by an attempt on the part of the boatman to exact four times the regular fare.

But a good dinner at the Globe (at parochial expense) and a report from the agent that the ship had sailed, restored Mr. Lobbit's equanimity ; and by the time that he was rattling along towards home by Christmas moonlight, he began to think himself a martyr to a tender heart, and to console

himself by calculating the value of the odd corner of Brand's acres, cut up into lots for his labourers' cottages. The result, fifty per cent., proved a balm to his wounded feelings.

I wish I could say that at the same hour John Brand was comforting his wife and little ones; sorry am I to report that he left them to weep and complain, while he went forward and smoked his pipe, and sang, and drank grog with a jolly party in the forecastle—for John's heart was hardened, and he cared little for God or man.

His old, fond love for his wife and children seemed to have died away. He left them, through the most part of the voyage, to shift for themselves—sitting forward—sullenly smoking, looking into vacancy, and wearying the sailors with asking "How many knots to-day, Jack? When do you think we shall see land?" So that the women passengers took a mortal dislike to him; and it being gossiped about, that when his wife was in the hospital he never went to see her for two days, they called him a brute. So "Brand the Brute" he was called until the end of the voyage. Then they were all dispersed, and such stories driven out of mind by new scenes.

John was hired to go into the far interior, where it was difficult to get free servants at all; so his master put up with the dead-weight encumbrance of the babies, in consideration of the clever wife and string of likely lads. Thus, in a new country, he began life again in a blue jersey and ragged corduroys, but the largest money income he had ever known.

The year before our Christmas dinner, Mrs. Chisholm made one of her marches through the

bush with an army of emigrants, consisting of parents with long families, rough country-bred single girls, with here and there a white-handed, useless young lady—the rejected ones of the Sydney hirers. She had to depend for the rations of her ragged regiment on the hospitality of the settlers on her route, and was never disappointed, although it often happened that a day's journey was commenced without any distinct idea of who would furnish the next dinner and breakfast.

On one of these foraging excursions—starting at day-dawn on horseback followed by her man Friday, an old *lag* (prisoner), in a light cart to carry the provender—she went forth to look for the flour, milk, and mutton, for the breakfast of a party whose English appetites had been sharpened by travelling at the pace of the drays all day, and sleeping in the open air all night.

The welcome smoke of the expected station was found; the light cart had gone on with the supplies, willingly granted by the hospitable Bushman; returning to her army at a foot-pace, musing, perhaps, on the future fortune of the half-dozen girls hired out the previous day, Mrs. C. came upon a small party which had also been encamping on the other side of the hills.

It consisted of two gawky lads in docked smock-frocks, woolly hats, rosy, sleepy countenances; fresh arrivals—living monuments of the care bestowed in developing the intelligence of the agricultural mind in England. They were hard at work on broiled pork. A regular hard-dried Bushman had just driven up a pair of blood mares from their night's feed, and a white-headed brisk kind of young old man, the master of the party, was sitting by the fire trying to feed an infant with some sort of mess

compounded with sugar. A dray heavily laden, with a bullock-team ready harnessed, stood prepared to start under the charge of the bullock-watchman.

The case was clear to a colonial eye; the white-headed man had been down to the port from his Bush-farm to sell his stuff, and was returning with two blood mares purchased, and two emigrant lads hired; but what was the meaning of the baby? We see strange things in the Bush, but a man-nurse is strange even there.

Although they had never met before, the white-headed man almost immediately recognised Mrs. C.,—for who did not know her, or of her, in the Bush?—so was more communicative than he otherwise might have been, and said,

“You see, ma’am, my lady, I mean, I have only got on my own place this three years; having a long family, we found it best to disperse about where the best wages was to be got. We began saving the first year, and my daughters have married pretty well, and my boys got to know the ways of the country. There’s three of them married, thanks to your ladyship; so we thought we could set up for ourselves. And we’ve done pretty tidy. So, as they were all busy at home, I went down for the first time to get a couple of mares, and see about hiring some lads out of the ships to help us. You see I’ve picked up two newish ones; I have docked their frocks to a useful length, and I think they’ll do after a bit; they can’t read, neither of them; but our teacher (she’s one my missis had from you) will soon fettle them; and I’ve got a power of things on the dray; I wish you could be there at unloading; for it being my first visit, I wanted something for all of them. But about this babby is a curious job. When I went aboard the ship to hire my shepherds, I

looked out for some of my own country; and while I was asking, I heard of a poor woman whose husband had been drowned in a drunken fit on the voyage, that was lying very ill, with a young babby, and not likely to live.

"Something made me go to see her; she had no friends on board, she knew no one in the colony. She started like, at my voice; one word brought on another, when it came out she was the wife of the son of my greatest enemy, Master Lobbit.

"She had been his father's servant, and married the son secretly; for this son was a wild, wicked man, worse than the father, but with those looks and ways that take the hearts of poor lasses. Well, we talked, and I questioned her—for she did not seem so ill as they had told me—she began to ask me who I was, and I did not want to tell; when I hesitated, she guessed, and cried out, 'What, John Brand, is it thee!'—and with that she screamed, and screamed, and went off quite light-headed, and never came to her senses until she died.

"So, as there was no one to care for the poor little babby, and as we had such a lot at home, what with my own children and my grandchildren, I thought one more would make no odds, so the gentleman let me take it, after I'd seen the mother decently buried.

"You see this feeding's a very awkward job, ma'am—and I've been five days on the road. But I think my missis will be pleased as much as with the gown I've bought her.

"Well," continued John, "the poor woman was old Joseph Lobbit's daughter-in-law. Her husband had been forging, or something, and would have been lagged if he'd stayed in England. I don't know but I might have been as bad if I had not

got out of the country when I did. But there's something here in always getting on, and not such a struggling and striving, that softens a poor man's heart. And I trust what I've done for this poor babby and its mother, may excuse my brutish behaviour when I was aboard ship. I could not help thinking when I was burying poor Jenny Lobbit (I mind her well, a nice little lass, about ten years old); I could not help thinking as she lay in a nice cloth-covered coffin, and a beautiful stone cut with her name and age, and a text on her grave, how different it is even for poor people to be buried here."

In my mind's eye there are sometimes two pictures. John Brand in the workhouse, thinking of murder and fire-raising in the presence of his prosperous enemy; and John Brand in his happy bush home nursing little Nancy Lobbit.

At Duxmoor the shop has passed into other hands. The ex-shopkeeper has bought and rebuilt the manor-house. He is the squire now, wealthier than ever he dreamed; on one estate a mine has been found; a railway has crossed and doubled the value of another; but his son is dead; his daughter has left him, and lives, he knows not where, a life of shame. Childless and friendless, the future is, to him, cheerless and without hope.

CHAPTER IX.

STORIES ROUND A BUSH HEARTH.

WHAT a bush-life may be made under the changes of the overwhelming emigration of gold-diggers and their followers, with the profits which turn to 6*d.* a pound the mutton and beef we used to boil down for tallow, I cannot say. I can say that the life we led, putting on one side interludes of adventure, was dreadfully dull; so I skip the events of years employed in making and saving money, which, except that sheep were the objects of our care, and blacks, and scab, and foot-rot, and catarrh the objects of our fear, afforded no more variety or romance than the daily routine of a Yorkshire woollen-mill, or a Lincolnshire farm. We had youth, animal spirits, no serious griefs to wear us down, and everything to hope: but the pleasures of adventure were as few and far between as the population.

We had not the ample resources of field sports which are to be had in other wild countries. No lions or grisly bears, no deer, no bison; nothing more dangerous than a stray bull, or more game-like than a kangaroo or an emu, and those grow scarce in proportion as sheep, nibbling the fine grasses, grow plentiful. Hawking has not yet been introduced, for the settlers have no time to train hawks, although some parts of the country are well suited for that sport.

These were the rather discontented conclusions to

which a party of us came, as, while the rain poured down in bucketfuls, we sat round a log-fire in the season of hurricanes, while on a visit to Martyn's comfortable homestead, the year after he married Jenny Brand, and frightfully disgusted his genteel aunt by this low match, which she did not get over until Martyn returned to England with the price of the "Bright Nugget" estate in his pocket. We had been disappointed in the letters we had sent a horseman a hundred miles to fetch; he had been delayed, as we presumed, by the swollen rivers.

At length Jenny Martyn came in, with the result of her exploration of a mysterious chest that had been found with a broken-down dray, a week before, at the foot of the Bush road over the mountains, in the shape of a suit of sailor's clothes, a broad-brimmed sombrero, and a guitar of South American manufacture, both rather the worse for wear. "Come," she exclaimed, "you have grumbled enough, Philip, you shall put this instrument in order and give us a song, and then Master Barnard, whose singing while he is dressing in a morning is truly dreadful, shall tell us a story."

Paginton made a wry face, mechanically began to tune the guitar, and after some pressing, half-closed his eyes, and gave us the following melancholy ditty, which we agreed to call

FALSE AND FAIR.

"I know that 'tis vain to regret thee,
And mourn o'er my desolate lot;
I feel that I ought to forget thee,
They say that by thee I'm forgot.

"But love against reason rebelling,
Aye conquers this too faithful heart;
Each moment, on what thou wert dwelling,
I blindly forget what thou art.

“And now that my future is blighted,
I wonder if thou canst be gay,
When thinking of him to whom plighted,
My faith thou hadst heart to betray.

“Oh, answer me—how couldst thou leave me,
Whose fault was to love thee too well?
But no more—lest my grieving should grieve thee;
Dear false one, for ever farewell!”

As he ceased, and his rich bass voice repeated the last verse, we men of course vehemently applauded, even taking our pipes out of our mouths for that purpose. It was getting dark, yet I thought I could see a rather serious expression in Philip's eyes, but our plaudits were turned into roars of laughter, by Jenny's exclaiming at the top of her voice, after a slight pause and cogitation on the meaning of the song—“Nasty creature, I can't bear such false wretches! I wonder you, Mr. Paginton, are not ashamed to make music about such a person.” Here Jack stopped her mouth with a kiss, for which he got a sharp slap.

Jenny then turned to me, “Mr. Barnard, tell us something amusing. What was that I saw you laughing about so the other day with my Jack?”

“Well,” said I, “anything for a quiet life, I will read a letter which fell out of a book I bought the last time I was in Sydney:—

“Oakdale Hall,
Cheshire, Monday.

“My dearest Polly,

“You will be surprised to find me dating this letter from a Hall in Cheshire, instead of from Peckham, but I have so much to tell you that I don't know where to begin. My dear Polly, I have been hunting, and carried off the fox's tail, that is, I

mean, his 'brush.' You know I always was old Gauntlet's favourite pupil at Brighton, and you were a shocking coward: but I must begin at the beginning.

"To-day it is raining shower-baths and water-spouts—I must not say cats and dogs. I am tired to death with pleasure; the fire in the nice little room they have given me is blazing away with a fine chump of beech, and I am quite in the humour for a regular gossip. You, my dear, I suppose are walking under a green parasol with an ugly on your bonnet, by the shores of the blue Mediterranean, or eating an ice under the vine-covered verandah, with Tasso or Petrarch in your hand—romantic little puss! But I don't envy you a bit. I would not exchange our rain, and fog, and frost, and snow for your golden climate and *dolce far niente*, and I'll tell you all about it, and make up a good packet worth the unconscionable postage.

"I shan't say anything about how we got on at Peckham or at Brighton, where papa took me, and left me with my aunt Faddy in the autumn, because you know all about that; horticultural fêtes, archery meetings, parties to Richmond and Greenwich with the City Companies, the Opera now and then as a great treat, and all the regular London life, besides riding lessons twice a week, and finishing lessons on the piano at a guinea each from that wonderful scaramouch, *Monsieur Douz-doigts*, all hair and fingers. And Brighton bathing and riding lessons, with Regent-street over again with the addition of the sea. At Brighton, I met Clara and Fanny Beaton, our old schoolfellows. Well, their papa—you must remember him, rather a handsome man, with a large frill to his shirt, who used to come and see them in a yellow gig, and bring most delicious tarts

from Birch's—has done something wonderful in the great Isabella Mines and the Trinchinopoly Railroad—made an enormous fortune. Everybody at Peckham adores him; my aunt Faddy speaks of him with tears in her eyes, and papa, in his grand way, calls him 'a most important member of the financial-ocracy.'

"They have left their cottage at Peckham, and gone to Hyde Park Gardens, in a house all gilt and plate-glass. Instead of that one Scotch parlour-maid, who always put her thumbs in the gravy, there were three enormous mutes in gorgeous liveries, who presented the vegetables and sauces with such a solemn air, when I dined there, that I really could not eat anything. Clara and Fanny have two of the loveliest gray horses, with long tails, you ever saw, although they cannot ride a bit; they can't even trot, and would not take a leap for the world. They have their own maid, a most impertinent personage, and such beautiful things—their bonnets from Paris every month. With all this, my dear, they have not a great deal of society yet, except men friends of Mr. Beaton's, old fellows in white cravats and gold chains. Although he is very kind, and lets them buy anything, he won't let them invite any of the officers they dance with.

"Clara and Fanny were delighted to have me with them every day; as I am tall and they are short, and I am dark and they are fair, we get on extremely well, so they made me promise that I would come down and visit them in Cheshire at Christmas, at Oakdale Manor, which Mr. Beaton had lately bought, with all the estate, from that Sir Francis Fastman. You may have seen him in Paris, a very handsome, naughty looking man, who was ruined last year.

"Accordingly, before we had been a week back at

Peckham, a letter came from Mrs. Beaton, asking me down to Oakdale to spend a few weeks, with a postscript, begging I would bring my music, and not forget my riding-habit.

"Papa was delighted when I showed him the letter; indeed, he seemed so glad to get rid of me, that I was half inclined not to go; sometimes I suspect him of thinking of marrying again. Miss Contango, since her father died, is always sending to consult him about her affairs; but no matter now, another time I will tell you of my dreadful suspicions of a step-mother! Papa gave me a very handsome present for my winter wardrobe—I should so like you to have seen it—and Mademoiselle Gentili did wonders. My dress bonnet was pink satin and *velours epinglé*. I wore it at church yesterday, and everybody turned round. Then the sweetest morning dress, quite new; a *douillette* blue *foulard*, made in a loose jacket, waistcoat with silver buttons, and plain full shirt with silver buttons down the front; a cambric *collarete* and a delicious white silk neck-tie, embroidered in blue and silver. My aunt Faddy gave me two little pets of caps, of Paris point, and old Monsieur Grimonprez, papa's Lyons correspondent, a pair of slippers, for what the impudent old fellow called my *mignon* feet, of maize-coloured velvet, trimmed with ermine—so exquisite, they would really make you scream. Among my evening dresses I have a black lace, with white lace flounces, in which Tom Beaton declares I look like an angelic ostrich.

"There had been a little snow, and it was a hard frost the day I set off with our cook's daughter Jenny, a fat, rosy girl of sixteen, with round black eyes in a constant state of wonder, as my maid. Such a bustle to get away in time for the train

with my trunks and baskets, only thirteen packages, I left two on the table; so it was eight o'clock in the evening before we reached the station, where one of the Beaton's carriages was to meet me to take me ten miles on to Oakdale. Instead of a close carriage, to my surprise, a mail-phaeton was waiting. In a minute I was in the midst of my trunks on the platform, and the train roared away like a monstrous rocket—the next minute, out jumped something tall from the phaeton, all wrapped in coats, and introduced himself as Mr. Thomas Beaton, apologised for his sisters not coming—they had been tired out at a ball the night before; he had just returned from hunting, and had only time to jump into his '*drag*' and get down in time to meet the train. I was so much surprised that, almost without a word, I allowed myself to be hustled into the phaeton and wrapped in a great bear-skin, while a servant with a spring-cart took charge of Jenny and the luggage.

"My dear Polly, did you ever ride in a mail-phaeton? My aunt used to say it was not a proper carriage for a young lady, but I assure you it is extremely nice.

"In a minute Mr. Tom Beaton was beside me, the groom let go the horses' heads, and away we went. The new moon shone out over the hedges and fields, all silver white with the hoar frost—the wheels crunched with a quick, dull sound over the hard road—the pole chains rattled—the horses pulled and snorted away with a fierce stamp, stamp—and for the first mile my companion did not say much, so busy was he holding them in, while I, cuddled up in my corner, with my muff to my face, answered only in monosyllables. Rushing through the moonlight, while the shadows of our swift horses

travelled still more swiftly before us, the icicles sparkled from the sprays on the hedges, like diamond drops; and the mist, rolling up from each broad field we passed, closed up the view in clouded mystery. Fast, fast we dashed along the high road, past straggling carts, the carters crying cheerily, 'good night, master;' past white cottages, half shrouded in dark gleaming evergreens; through a turnpike, where the man stood to bow, so unlike London turnpike-men; quick turning into a dark lane, through a thick wood, where the rabbits dashed under the horses' feet from side to side, and I thought of bears and robbers. It was delightful! Once, just after splashing through a little half-frozen stream, an echo from a neighbouring hill sent back the ringing of the chains, the whir of the wheels, and the tramping of our steeds in a strange medley, like echoes from fairy land. My dear Polly, one hour of such a ride is worth a whole season of 'the lady's mile' in Hyde Park, at funeral pace, in a fly brougham.

"At length we reached the lodge of Oakdale Park. The gates were open, and we galloped up the winding avenue beneath great branching trees, and came out on the sweep before Oakdale Manor—a mansion such as we dream of in dreams, and read about in novels, with black and white timbered walls and huge peaked gables, large enough to lodge an army.

"But there was no time for studying architecture: in one minute the door opened, I was lifted out, and put down in a broad, low, wainscoted hall, in front of a huge staircase of black oak, and in the next out came Clara and Fanny, Mrs. Beaton, all smiles and black velvet, Mr. Beaton, in a white waistcoat, with a dinner-napkin in his hand, and a crowd of servants. It was like a scene in a pantomime. The house was

full of visitors ; so, as I had no idea of appearing to disadvantage, not being one of the sad and sickly ones, I pleaded a headache, and got leave to stay in my room, have a cup of tea, and go to bed.

“The next morning, not very early, the odour of a delicious cup of coffee, and the crackling of a bright wood fire awakened me from delicious dreams. They used to tell us at Mrs. Tartine’s that our school-days would be the happiest of our lives ; my dear, I don’t believe a word of it. Do you remember dressing in the cold mornings, just before the Christmas holidays, breaking the ice to wash, the dreadful lessons before breakfast, and the sloe-leaves tea ? I thought of all this, with my nose out of bed inhaling the coffee, while looking at the frozen landscapes on the window-panes.

“The house is full of visitors, and there is plenty of amusement for every one. Mr. Beaton, whose notions are princely, bought not only the estate, but all the pictures and furniture as it stood, with the best horses, the stock of a home farm, and has taken on all the old servants that chose to stay ; and having put himself in the hands of the best restorers and decorators, the house has been made quite as brilliant in gold and colours, red and blue, and much more comfortable than when Queen Elizabeth visited Sir Francis Holdfast, a paternal ancestor of Sir Francis Fastman, the late proprietor.

“My room overlooks the lawn, divided by a ha-ha from a park full of fine trees ; within a quarter of a mile bounding the view is a lake, formed by a stream that runs through the estate ; beyond, in the far distance, a line of snow-capped Welsh Hills.

“ ‘Now,’ said Fanny, who came in to have the first gossip, ‘tell me what you would like to do in-

doors or out-of-doors. Papa won't be visible until near dinner-time. Mamma is at the head of an industrious brigade, as Tom calls them, of fancy-workers, doing a tremendous piece of tapestry; if you like to take your pattern-work into the billiard-room, it is very warm there, and we shall find Mrs. O'Moran, a delightful Irish widow, and Madam Strasbourg d'Alsace, the young wife of the great French banker, with all their admirers—among them my brother Tom, who, you know, has been in South America, and all over the world; he is invaluable to papa, as he knows about horses, and everything. Then if you are one of the mediævalists, there is my brother John home from Oxford, who will talk to you about lecterns, and rood-screens, and clerestories by the hour. It is he who has undertaken the management of the restorations; and I assure you already we have had the Bishop of H——, and the Earl of E——, and no end of antiquaries to see them. If you are for out-of-doors, there is the model farm, with some of the dearest calves, such a lot of sucking pigs, a duck of a foal, some Cochins China fowls that cost as much as a pony, and Dorking hen-eggs at five shillings apiece; and then we can go and see the pheasants fed, or walk down by the evergreen-walk to the lake, where they are going to skate after lunch. Papa had a whole box of skates, of all sizes, sent from Sheffield as soon as the frost began, and a stove put up in the fishing-house; so we can look at the skaters in comfort out of the windows.'

"Out-of-doors was my choice. After a little chat in the morning-room, where, I flatter myself, my costume created some sensation, we started, well wrapped up in furs, a pretty large party; for when Tom Beaton—every one calls him Tom—determined to

show the strangers the lions, the ladies followed him, and the gentlemen followed the ladies.

"First we went to the farm, where the bailiff—a wonderful Scotchman, as dry as his native snuff—showed us over an establishment much more comfortable, and quite as clean as our rooms at Mrs. Tartine's. The foals were elegant creatures, quite aristocratic; as for the pigs, you never saw such happy balls of fat. They are washed regularly twice a week with Windsor soap and Welsh flannel, and Tom Beaton told us that every pound of pork costs about five shillings. But the dearest ducks were the calves, two milk white ones, such loves! However, we had not been admiring them long before we got a horrid fright. We all let them suck our hands, and Laura Giggle, who writes poetry, and is very sentimental, let the one they call "Althorp" suck the rings off her fingers. We all thought it would kill the poor dear creature, and Laura began to cry and threaten to go into hysterics, but whether it was on account of the calf's health, or because she had lost a turquoise she wore upon her engagement finger, I cannot tell; luckily, just as Tom Beaton, who looked rather quizzical, had got a large piece of snow, as a specific for Laura's hysterics, the bailiff came to us with the rings which the little animal had champed out in the straw.

"After that we went through the fancy dairy, with a floor of tessellated pavement and walls of china tiles, a stream through the centre, and the bowls of Swiss wood. Having begun, our party were obliged to go through, but I could see that some of both ladies and gentlemen were horribly bored, and Mr. Stencil, the artist, with the long hair, every now and then looked piteously at his thin patent leather boots as we passed through the cattle yards.

"The party to go down to see the head keeper's lodge was rather smaller, but it was a delightful walk. We ran sliding along, like a parcel of schoolboys, between high plantations of laurel, holly, arbutus, mountain ash twinkling in the sun with their red berries, and all sorts of evergreens; a whole troop of dogs frisking and chasing the hares and rabbits before us, while every now and then a stray deer dashed out of a thicket.

"The keeper's lodge was on a hillock in the middle of a wood. He shut up the dogs, took us into an open space, put us out of sight, threw down some buckwheat and barley, and whistled shrilly two or three times, and, lo and behold, the pheasants came trooping and fluttering in from all quarters—a most beautiful sight; some set-to to eat greedily, some suspiciously perched in the trees around.

"To me, who had never seen a pheasant, except in a poulterer's shop, the sight of the gorgeous purple-breasted and red-eyed cocks, and sober, elegant, demure hens, was most fascinating; but our curiosity having gradually pushed us on more and more, and something having set Fanny Beaton laughing, the cock pheasants gave a loud screaming crow, and with a whirring of wings that was quite startling, they all flew away.

"In a walk on a bright frosty winter's day through a place where game and birds are so plentiful, there is something amusing at every step, and the dry crisp air makes one ready to be amused at everything. Hares started from tussocks of grass; wild ducks and snipe rose from bits of rush-covered marshy ground, where a spring trickled a little way in spite of the frost; and going round the lake we put up a great bittern. Rosy, cheerful, and hungry

we returned to luncheon, all as good friends as if we had known each other a month.

"After luncheon, served in a room nearly four hundred years old, we made a party to go down to the lake to skate and look on.

"Now, though I am rather stupid at crochet, and all sorts of fancy work, thank goodness, the winter before last, Madame de Sluyts, our Dutch neighbour, taught me to skate, and except Madame Strasbourg, who has wintered in Brussels, and can do everything, no other lady of the party could—John Beaton, the Oxonian, is worthy of being a member of the skating club, so we got on famously. This lake is beautiful, dotted over with islands, where swans, water-hens, and water-fowl build; it is bordered on one side by a thick covert, and on the other by a bed of reeds and rushes. As we glide along we see the emerald-backed king-fisher dart from his leafless tree, and in remote corners a heron slowly flapping rises. Gliding along with my hands in the pockets of my bearskin polka, sometimes circling, sometimes racing down before the wind, I do not envy you your perpetual summer climate: certainly skating must be nearer the sensation of flying than anything else, even than galloping along on a thorough-bred horse. And although it is all very well to display your talents in a quadrille of the skating club, yet it is more intensely delightful to wind round the shores of a solitary lake, leaving your companions at a distance, where you can hear no sound but the click-click of your steel armed feet, or the flutter of the birds rising from air-holes made by the gamekeeper for the deer to drink * * * * *

"That our evenings pass pleasantly I need not say,

with music, dancing, acting characters, and telling stories. We made Tom Beaton tell his adventures among the Indians, and dress up in his South American costume, and play on the guitar; really he is so clever!

"I have now been here three weeks, and I have some new amusement every day.

"Although time passed very pleasantly skating on the lake, riding out on horseback, and driving about in great cavalcades, playing at billiards and all the proper amusements, such as making John Beaton read poetry to a select party, until some of the other gentlemen came home loaded with game, there was a constant examination of the barometer and hopes for the breaking up of the frost by Tom Beaton and his friends, a party which included amongst them a young Irish clergyman without cure of souls, a stock jobber who wore wonderful cravats and endless gold chains, and a lawyer who dressed like a crow.

"I awoke one morning, after a late supper and a most riotous game at blind-man's buff, dreaming that I had tumbled into the lake, to find a drizzly rain, the lake patched with water, and the peacocks on the lawn drenched and miserably screaming: in two days the frost was gone.

"Sitting in the library, the conversation turned on hawking, of which the Oxonian gave us a brilliant description. 'Well,' said his brother, 'if we can't have hawking, at any rate we can show the ladies some coursing on the moor. Who's for a ride, and who's for a drive?'

"Helter-skelter we almost all flew at the new idea. I could not have thought it possible to have been dressed and out so soon. A proposition to

course in the park was overruled, so we cantered to the moors, which stretch for miles, covered with gorse and broken with steep gorges.

"A gamekeeper walked before us with a brace of greyhounds held in a leash, so that he could let them go in a moment: for want of time to send for beaters, another went forward with an old pointer. Now imagine us all eagerly waiting for the word. The pointer traverses the ground in quarters, not missing a foot, with fiery eye and tail erect: he shows signs of excitement—he pauses—he stops dead. The man with the greyhounds hastens up; another, with a long staff, beats the furze bushes towards which the pointer was stealing; up jumps a great hare, and bounds down a steep open cart track. Loo, loo, loo, cry the men: the greyhounds are loosed, at the same moment we start off at a gallop. I never think of the rough road, my eyes are fixed on the flying hare. I wish it may escape, but the hounds go bounding on, one black, one white; Tom Beaton cheers them. They do not gain an inch. As we ascend a little, the hare clearly gains; we descend, the dogs get nearer; we are going at full speed, every moment the excitement rises; the black dog is the fastest, he gains—the hare dodges, but the white dog is there and turns her—zig-zag she goes. They are on her, they must have her; my heart is in my mouth—I don't want the dogs to be beat this minute, the next I wish the hare to get away; I feel the spirit of sport rising in me. Another steep bit of hill gives the hare a chance, but as we get on the level the hounds gain on her. Black turns her again; white catches her in his mouth and throws her up; black seizes her; one painful squeal and it is all over. 'Seven minutes,' says the gamekeeper, 'a famous stout hare,

and in a few minutes more our fat horses must have stood still quite winded.'

"We killed two more, and missed two hares just in the same way; but they cry so like a child, that after the first burst I could not like it.

"As Tom Beaton rode home he said, 'You can ride boldly, I see, Miss Splashton. Brighton Downs are good practice; we must have you out with the fox-hounds, but not on that prancing pony.'

" 'Indeed,' said I, 'papa would never allow—'

" 'Oh, never mind papa, you shall only go to see them throw off on my old horse Orion.'

"After this experiment the house became divided into *sitizens* and cavaliers, and we rode out daily, practising easy jumps, in the park and all round the country. It is really very easy with a good horse; you have only to sit back and give him his head, it is not more difficult than learning the *valse à deux temps*. And now comes my grand feat.

"The day before yesterday Tom Beaton said, after dinner, 'Who's for the fox-hounds to-morrow? a grand day; they meet at Colonel Egret's, only five miles off; he has just come into this part of the country, and gives a breakfast; so if the weather keeps open, there will be a field worth the ladies seeing, and there's a sure find at the Brook Valley Cover, near his house.'

"Almost all agreed to go, on horseback, or in carriages; even Mr. Chrysolite, the æsthetical critic (do you understand that hard word, my dear, I don't), who considers field sports the barbarous amusements of uneducated savages (they do say he beats his wife), rather than be left behind, agreed to take a seat in the barouche.

"The night before I could scarcely sleep for thinking of the sport. I got out of bed several times to

see that it was not a frost. Really, Polly, I ought to have been a boy; I have a great mind to be a Bloomer. The morning was lovely, cloudy, and rather warm—just the thing, Tom said; a south wind scarcely rustled the dry leaves in the park.

“Breakfast seemed as if it would never be over. The old sportsmen fed steadily, the young ones rushed about frantic for boots, spurs, and gloves, not to be found.

“When the horses came round, we had every sort, from little Mary Beaton’s Shetland to young Bob Harkaway’s vicious chestnut thoroughbred. But I was dreadfully disappointed when my Orion came out. Imagine a great big brown horse, with very little mane, bony, and angular; his legs all over scars, walking so deliberately, that it seemed as if the groom was obliged to pull him along, while half the other horses were prancing, rearing, and squealing. The only good points were bright eyes and thin, sleek, shiny coat. I could not help crying, ‘Well, Master Tom, you seem determined to make me a figure.’

“Tom, who was just helping Laura Giggles on her pony, only laughed, and said, in his rough way, ‘You can’t change now; but you will find Orion all right.’

“Once in motion, every one was in spirits. The frost had disappeared; the pasture fields had a mellow tone; the robins sang out cheerily from the leafless trees; the purple-necked pheasants fed close to the road-side without fear, or fluttered heavily up as we passed; the partridges cowered down beside clods of earth; from cross-roads and by-lanes horsemen and carriages of sporting cut joined or passed our cavalcade; and far over the fields, bits of pink, which gradually swelled into full-grown red-coated

well-mounted men, came towards us, slowly leaping hedges, or opening the gates of bridle-roads; jolly farmers in green, brown, and black coats, and tops, or gaiters, on serviceable rough nags, flocked in from their homesteads; lots of pedestrians, in smock frocks and wide-awakes over brown rosy faces, with ash sticks in hand, trotted along in great glee, all bound for the 'meet.' We were all in good humour—we cantered beside the carriages—we forgot our dignity, and said 'good morning' to every one; even Mr. Chrysolite, who hates hunting and everything of sport that cannot be performed on boards by gas-light, thawed as he lounged in the barouche, and remarked that a scarlet coat on a grey horse, passing by a holly garden hedge at a distance, made 'a very nice bit of colour.'

"Thus we reached the straight avenue that leads to Colonel Egret's house. Imagine a square stone house, of not very ancient date, sheltered by a semi-circular mound, covered with the finest laurels and red-berried arbutus; in front, and spread over the little park, nearly a hundred horses, some led, some mounted; on one side, in a circle kept clear, the huntsman, an old, thin, bright-eyed, wiry man, on a fine bay mare, much like the one I was riding, surrounded by his hounds; while the two whips rode round and kept them in order.

"When the signal was given for moving, one of the whips rode first, then followed the huntsman with the hounds, then the other whip, and then the crowd—Lord Strathdale, on the finest hunter in the world, stirrup with Jack Jobson, the apothecary's apprentice, on his 15*l*. galloway. Crash, crash we went, the pebbles flying, at a sharp trot up a narrow lane; but way was politely made for the ladies.

"The covert to be drawn, that is to say, where

we were to find the fox, lay in a deep gorge,—a sort of grove of trees and brushwood, surrounded by a great hedge and ditch, intersected by a stream, which, on leaving the covert, meandered through a long vale of meadows, as we could see for a long distance. The carriages were drawn up on the brow of a grass hill—the horsemen dispersed in patches round the covert—some got finely scolded for being in the way. Tom Beaton brought up an old groom to me and Mrs. O'Moran, and said, 'These ladies can ride better than the rest, so I wish you to let them see as much as possible; of course, if we take the vale they can't follow.' As he spoke, the huntsman leaped the fence of the covert, the hounds dashed in at his word, and spread: we could see them here and there, their tails waving above the long dry grass. There was a silence for a few minutes—the hounds, all but one or two, disappeared; gentlemen chatted and smoked; then came a sharp shrill cry from a hound; then the huntsman cried, 'Hark to Echo!' with such a voice! then the other hounds all joined, and we could see them below us, rushing round close to the hedge; then they were silent, only now and then a low whimpering cry from a single hound. My horse pricked up his ears,—the sportsmen gathered up their reins, and threw away their cigars; then came a grand crash of the hounds. 'Tally-ho! away!' cried a green-coated farmer. Down the steep hill, at full speed, towards a monstrous hedge and ditch, leading to the valley, rode a score of horsemen; at the further end of the covert we could see the hounds leaping out, and with one cry, away over the green valley at our feet. The huntsman crashed through the bushes, leaped the hedge and ditch that surrounded the covert at a standing jump, and, blowing his horn, followed at full speed; half-a-

dozen of the best mounted scarlet and green were soon at his heels, others galloped wildly about, looking for easy places to get to them, or avoid the brook, soon to be crossed. 'We shall never see them again,' said the road-riders, 'if they keep to the valley.'

"As I sat staring with all my eyes, the old groom said, 'This way, Miss,' and in a moment we were galloping at full speed along the high ground forming the arc of the bow the hounds and hunters were traversing below us. When we passed the covert we saw them once or twice; soon sight and sounds were lost, but our guide seemed to know his line, led the way through gaps, opened gates, and pulled down rails, with extraordinary agility for so old a man, while I found Orion as tractable as a pony, very fast, and easy to sit. 'If they don't kill below, he (the fox) will make for Red Mill gorse, and we shall be there first, Miss, never fear.' So field after field was passed, up and down through farm-yards, then along lanes, a few knowing fat farmers following 'old Will Pelham,' and after about half-an-hour's riding, without taking a leap beyond a little ditch or two, as we came up a narrow lane where there was a great waggon full of straw stopping up all the way, we saw the hounds slowly crossing before us, and come to a check in a field full of sheep on our left. By this time my impatience and courage were at boiling point; Mrs. O'Moran, who is a splendid horsewoman, began to talk with more Irish accent, and her cheeks glowed. While we were dead-locked in the lane, the hounds spreading all over the field, the huntsman followed, his horse all foam, called his hounds to him, and led them on to another field ('made a cast' is the term). The dear things went snuffing about. Tom

Beaton, Harkaway, Lord Strathdale, an Irish parson, and two farmers came up; the next minute with just one cry, the hounds streamed away. A great ditch and blackthorn-hedge lay between us; the only open place was where a plank led to a high double foot-stile; as Tom Beaton passed, standing up in his stirrups, crying, 'Tally-ho! forward—forward,' Mrs. O'Moran said, 'I can't stand this, my dear,—you stay with the groom. Come up, my beauty!' and she was over the stile. Before I knew what I was about, I gave Orion his head, and he followed;—oh! how frightened I was when he rose in the air, but he dropped on his feet like a deer. Some one cried out with amazement; the next moment the old groom was at my side, saying, as we raced along, 'Sit back, Miss, and don't touch the curb-rein.' Away we went, over broad pastures, Mrs. O'Moran leading the way, taking hedges, and turf-banks, and ox-rails, as straight as a line. About two fields ahead were the hounds, and the gentlemen were separated from us, on a parallel line, by high inclosures, their horses more tired than ours. On we flew—flying is the only word,—I lost my whip and one glove, my back hair tumbled down; I felt that my horse, so strong, so light,—bounding as if on steel springs,—could do anything. The old groom was ready in a moment to open a gate; through a small wood we galloped, by a bridle-road, down a steep hill, muddy and narrow, the branches scratching our faces,—the hounds scarcely pausing, but just whimpering, and then away,—out we came upon a broad, long, sloping field, where we could see a brook zig-zagging at the bottom. As we got outside, the leading hounds were climbing the opposite bank; about a dozen out of the whole field were scattered before us. 'Hold hard, Miss,' cried old Pelham. 'Come along,' cried the Irish widow,

'we'll show them the way.' I was mad—I was ready for anything. Down we went, racing over the sloping turf; as we came up I had an indistinct vision of two or three velvet caps floundering in the brook. I gave a loud scream, and the next moment Orion was landed on the opposite side, clear over Mr. Harkaway and his chestnut. With that effort my strength seemed to fail, my eyes swam, my chest heaved, I was wearied, but I would not give in. Up the opposite hill we went about a mile; fortunately the fences were easy. Tom Beaton rode beside me, scolding a little, but I made no answer; crossing a turf-bank, half-a-dozen yards from the hounds, and a hundred from a gorse cover, we caught sight of the white-tipped brush of the fox. The next moment the crash of the hounds, and the who-whoop of the huntsman told the tale. I got over the last fence, how I know not; I saw the huntsman with the dead fox in his hands; I heard Mrs. O'Moran say something to Lord S., pointing to me; the next moment, I am ashamed to own it, I slipped from my horse, and fainted—Tom Beaton just caught me in time.

"But it was only momentary. I revived after a drink from Lord Strathdale's silver flask—I'm afraid it was *eau de vie*, my dear—in time to see so many coming up at full speed from all sides, that it was a wonder where they had been. I rode home in one of the carriages, and got a good scolding; it was very naughty, but very nice. Tell me, my dear Polly, was not this a famous *Christmas game*? I should so like to live in the country. But it is getting late; I have filled my paper. Adieu, my dear girl, and don't scold your Tom-boy friend. Write soon.

"Your affectionate

"JULIA.

“P.S.—Tom Beaton, who has been looking over my shoulder, says I shall live in the country if I like, and ride Orion every week in the season. Will you be bridesmaid, my dear?”*

Great was the applause when Julia's letter was finished; from half-a-dozen voices came spontaneously a chorus of “Tally-ho!” and we went deep into fox-hunting, whereon ensued a discussion on the comparative merits of that glorious English sport and the tiger hunt, in the course of which Philip Paginton came out with the following rhapsody.

* A part only of this “Sketch of Country Sports” appeared in the *Illustrated News*, Jan. 7, 1852.

CHAPTER X.

TALLY-HO !

“FOX-HUNTING, I maintain, is entitled to be considered one of the fine arts, standing somewhere between music and dancing. For ‘Tally-ho!’ like the favourite evening gun of colonising orators, has been ‘carried round the world.’ The plump mole-fed foxes of the neutral ground of Gibraltar have fled from the jolly cry ; it has been echoed back from the rocky hills of our island possessions in the Mediterranean ; it has startled the jackal on the mountains of the Cape, and his red brother on the burning plains of Bengal ; the wolf of the pine forests of Canada has heard it, cheering on fox-hounds to an unequal contest ; and here the wretched dingoe and the bounding kangaroo have learned to dread the sound.

“In our native land ‘Tally-ho!’ is shouted and welcomed in due season by all conditions of men ; by the ploughman, holding hard his startled colt ; by the woodman, leaning on his axe before the half-felled oak ; by bird-boys from the tops of leafless trees ; even Dolly Dumpling, as she sees the white tipped brush flash before her market-cart in a deep-banked lane, stops, points her whip, and in shrill treble screams ‘Tally-ho!’

“And when at full speed the pink, green, brown, and black coated followers of any of the ninety packs which our England maintains, sweep through a village, with what intense delight the whole population

turn out! Young mothers stand at the doors, holding up their crowing babies; the shopkeeper, with his customers, adjourns to the street; the windows of the school are covered with flattened noses; the parson, if of the right sort, smiles blandly, and waves his hand from the porch of the vicarage to half-a-dozen friends; while the surgeon pushes on his galloway and joins for half-an-hour; all the little boys holla in chorus, and run on to open gates without expecting sixpence. As for the farmers, those who do not join the hunt criticise the horseflesh, speculate on the probable price of oats, and tell 'Missis' to set out the big round of beef, the bread, the cheese, and get ready to draw some strong ale,— 'in case of a check, some of the gentlemen might like lunch as they come back.'

"It is true, among the five thousand who follow the hounds daily in the hunting season, there are to be found, as among most medleys of five thousand, a certain number of fools and brutes—mere animals, deaf to the music, blind to the living poetry of nature. To such men hunting is a piece of fashion or vulgar excitement. But bring hunting in comparison with other amusements, and it will stand a severe test. Are you an admirer of scenery, an amateur or artist? have you traversed Greece and Italy, Switzerland and Norway, in search of the picturesque? You do not know the beauties of your own country, until, having hunted from Northumberland to Cornwall, you have viewed the various counties under the three aspects of a fox-hunter's day—the 'morning ride,' 'the run,' and 'the return home.'

"The morning ride, slowly pacing, full of expectation, your horse as pleased as yourself; sharp and clear in the grey atmosphere the leafless trees and white

farm-houses stand out, backed by a curtain of mist hanging on the hills in the horizon. With eager eyes you take all in; nothing escapes you; you have cast off care for the day. How pleasant and cheerful everything and every one looks! Even the cocks and hens, scratching by the road side, have a friendly air. The turnpike-man relaxes, in favour of your 'pink,' his usual grimness. A tramping woman, with one child at her back and two running beside her, asks charity; you suspect she is an impostor, but she looks cold and pitiful; you give her a shilling, and the next day you don't regret your foolish benevolence. To your mind the well-cultivated land looks beautiful. In the monotony of ten acres of turnips, you see a hundred pictures of English farming life, well-fed cattle, good wheat crops, and a little barley for beer. Not less beautiful is the wild gorse-covered moor—never to be reclaimed, I hope—where the wiry, white-headed, bright-eyed huntsman sits motionless on his old white horse, surrounded by the pied pack—a study for Landseer.

"But if the morning ride creates unexecuted cabinet pictures and unwritten sonnets, how delightful 'the find,' 'the run' along brook-intersected vales, up steep hills, through woodlands, parks, and villages, showing you in byways little gothic churches, ivy-covered cottages, and nooks of beauty you never dreamed of, alive with startled cattle and hilarious rustics.

"Talk of epic poems, read in bowers or at firesides, what poet's description of a battle could make the blood boil in delirious excitement, like a seat on a long-striding hunter, clearing every obstacle with firm elastic bounds, holding in sight without gaining a yard on the flying pack, while the tip of Rey-

nard's tail disappears over the wall at the top of the hill!

"And, lastly,—tired, successful, hungry, happy,—the return home, when the shades of evening, closing round, give a fantastic, curious, mysterious aspect to familiar road-side objects! Loosely lounging on your saddle, with half-closed eyes, you almost dream—the gnarled trees grow into giants, cottages into castles, ponds into lakes. The maid of the inn is a lovely princess, and the bread and cheese she brings (while, without dismounting, you let your thirsty horse drink his gruel) tastes more delicious than the finest supper of champagne, with a *pâté* of tortured goose's liver, that ever tempted the appetite of a humane, anti-fox hunting, poet-critic, exhausted by a long night of opera, ballet, and champagne-punch.

"Are you fond of agriculture? You may survey all the progress and ignorance of an agricultural district in rides across country; you may sound the depth of the average agricultural mind while trotting from cover to cover. Are you of a social disposition? What a fund of information is to be gathered from the acquaintances made, returning home after a famous day, 'thirty-five minutes without a check.' In a word, fox-hunting affords exercise and healthy excitement, without headaches or heartaches, without late hours, without the 'terrible next morning' that follows so many town amusements. Fox-hunting draws men from towns, promotes a love of country life, fosters skill, courage, temper; for a bad-tempered man can never be a good horseman.

"To the right-minded, as many feelings of thankfulness and praise to the Giver of all good will arise, sitting on a fiery horse, subdued to courageous obedience for the use of man, while surveying a pack of

hounds ranging an autumnal thicket with fierce intelligence, or looking down on a late moorland, broken up to fertility by man's skill and industry, as in a solitary walk on the sea-shore, or on a Highland hill."

Here Philip stopped, out of breath, ran his fingers over the old guitar, and hummed Kilruddery, which we forthwith sang in chorus; and had we possessed a copy of the Squire of "Audley Ha's" hunting songs;—the best ever written,—we should, no doubt, have sung them all.

Then came a call on the Civilian for a story, on condition that it should not be about tigers, as we had three weeks of them on the ride up from Maitland.

"Well," said Bob Craig, "I will tell you a story of my Gallop for Life."

CHAPTER XI.

A GALLOP FOR LIFE.

“ABOUT twenty years ago, after a fatiguing London season, I was stopping at the decayed port and bathing village of Parkgate, on the Dee, opposite the equally decayed town and castle of Flint. It was a curious place to choose for amusement, for it had, and has, no recommendation except brackish water, pleasant scenery at high water, and excessive dulness. But, to own the truth, I was in love—desperately in love—with one of the most charming, provoking little sylphs in the world, who, after driving me half crazy in London, was staying on a visit with an uncle, a Welsh parson, at dreary Parkgate. Not that it was dreary to me when Laura was amiable; on the contrary, I wrote to my friends and described it as one of the most delightful watering-places in England, and, by so doing, lost for ever the good graces and legacy of my Aunt Grumph, who travelled all the way from Brighton on my description, and only stayed long enough to change horses. One sight of the one street of tumble-down houses, in face of a couple of miles of sand and shingle at low water, was enough. She never spoke to me again, except to express her extreme contempt for my opinion.

“Our chief amusement was riding on the sand, and sometimes crossing to Flint at low water. At Parkgate, whence formerly the Irish packets sailed, the fisher-girls can walk over at low water, tucking

up their petticoats in crossing the channel down which the main stream of fresh water flows.

"I was teaching Laura to ride on a little Welsh pony, and the sands made a famous riding-school. I laugh now when I think of the little rat of a pony she used to gallop about, for she now struggles into a brougham of ordinary dimensions with great difficulty, and weighs nearly as much as her late husband, Mr. Alderman Mallard. In a short time, Laura made so much progress in horsemanship, that she insisted on mounting my hackney, a full-sized well-bred animal, and putting me on the rat-pony. When I indulged her in this fancy—for of course she had her own way—I had the satisfaction of being rewarded by her roars of laughter at the ridiculous figure I cut, ambling beside her respectable uncle, on his cart-horse cob, with my legs close to the ground, and my nose peering over the little Welshman's shaggy ears, while my fairy galloped round us, drawing all sorts of ridiculous comparisons.

"This was bad enough; but when Captain Plume, the nephew of my charmer's aunt's husband, a handsome fellow, with 'a lovely gray horse, with such a tail,' as Laura described it, came up from Chester to stay a few days, I could stand my rat-pony no longer, and felt much too ill to ride out; so stood at the window of my lodgings with my shirt-collar turned down, and Byron in my hand, open at one of the most murderous passages, watching Laura on my chestnut, and Captain Plume on his gray, cantering over the deserted bed of the Dee. They were an aggravatingly handsome couple, and the existing state of the law on manslaughter enabled me to derive no satisfaction from the hints contained in the 'Giaour' or the 'Corsair.' Those

were our favourite books of reference for young England in those days. Indeed, we were all amateur pirates, and felons in theory: but when I had been almost thrown into a low fever by the debased state of civilisation, which prevented me from challenging Captain Plume to single combat, with Laura for the prize of the victor, instead of a cell in Chester Castle, my eyes fell on an advertisement in a local paper, which turned my thoughts into a new channel, of '*Sale of Blood Stock, Hunters, and Hackneys*,' at Plas * * *, near Holywell.

"I determined to give up murder, and buy another horse, for I could ride as well as the Captain; and then what glorious *tête-à-têtes* I could have, with my hand on the pommel of Laura's side-saddle. The idea put me in good-humour. Regimental duties having suddenly recalled Captain Plume, I spent a delightful evening with Laura; she quite approved of my project, and begged that I would choose a horse 'with a long tail, of a pretty colour,' which is every young lady's idea of what a horse should be. Accordingly, I mounted my chestnut on a bright morning of July, and rode across to Flint, accompanied by a man to bring back my intended purchase.

"It was dead low water, when, full of happy thoughts, in the still warm silence of the summer morning, holding my eager horse hard in, I rode at a foot-pace across the smooth, hard, wave-marked bed of the river. There was not a cloud in the sky. The sun, rising slowly, cast a golden glow over the sparkling sand. Pat-pat-pit-pat, went my horse's feet, not loud enough to disturb the busy crows and gulls seeking their breakfast; they were not afraid of me; they knew I had no gun. I remember it; I see it all before me, as if it were

yesterday, for it was one of the most delicious moments of my life. But the screaming gulls and whistling curlews were put to flight, before I had half crossed the river's bed, by the cheerful chatter, laughter, and fragments of Welsh airs sung in chorus by a hearty crowd of cockle and muscle gatherers, fishermen, and farmers' wives, on their way to the market on the Cheshire side—men, women (they were the majority), and children on foot, on ponies and donkeys, and in little carts. Exchanging good-humoured jokes, I passed on until I came to the ford of the channel, where the river runs between banks of deep soft sand. At low water, at certain points, in summer, it is but a few inches deep; but after heavy rains, and soon after the turning of the tide, the depth increases rapidly.

“At the ford I met a second detachment of Welsh peasantry preparing to cross, by making bundles of shoes and stockings, and tucking up petticoats very deftly. Great was the fun and the splashing, and plenty of jokes on the *Saxon* and his red horse going the wrong way. The Welsh girls in this part of the country are very pretty, with beautiful complexions, a gleam of gold in their dark hair, and an easy graceful walk, from the habit of carrying the water-pitchers from the wells on their heads. The scene made me feel anything but melancholy or ill-natured. I could not help turning back to help a couple of little damsels across, pillion-wise, who seemed terribly afraid of wetting their finery at the foot ford.

“Having passed the channel, the wheels and foot-marks formed a plain direction for a safe route, which, leaving Flint Castle on my right, brought me into the centre of Flint, without any need of a guide. The rest of my road was straightforward

and common-place. I reached the farm where the sale was to take place, in time for breakfast, and was soon lost in a crowd of country squires, Welsh parsons, farmers, horsedealers, and grooms.

"Late in the day I purchased a brown stallion, with a strain of Arab blood, rather undersized, but compact, one of the handsomest I ever saw before or since, very powerful, and nearly thorough-bred. When the auctioneer had knocked him down to me, I said to one of the grooms of the establishment who was helping my man—handing him a crown-piece at the same time—

"'As the little brown horse is mine, with all faults, just have the goodness to tell me what is his fault?'

"'Why, sir,' he answered, 'he can walk, trot, gallop, and jump, first-rate, surely; but he's very awkward to mount, and when you are on, he'll try uncommon hard to get you off, for two minutes; if you stick fast, he will be quiet enough all day.'

"'Thank you, my man,' I replied; 'I'll try him directly.'

"Just before starting I found the chestnut had a shoe loose, and sent him to the nearest blacksmith, two miles off. I had promised Laura to return by eight o'clock, to finish a delightful book we were reading aloud together, until the tiff about Captain Plume had interrupted us. You may judge if I was not impatient; and yet, with fifteen miles to ride to Flint, I had no time to spare.

"My friend the groom saddled the brown horse, and brought him down to the open road to me. He trotted along, with shining coat and arched neck, snorting and waving his great tail like a lion. As he piaffed and paraded sideways along, casting back his full eye most wickedly, every motion spoke

mischievous ; but there was no time for consideration ; I had barely an hour to do fifteen miles of rough roads before crossing the river. I had intended to ride the chestnut, who was accustomed to water, but the loose shoe upset that arrangement.

"Without giving him any time to see what I was about, I caught him by the mane and the reins, threw myself from a sloping bank into the saddle, and, although he dragged the groom across the road, I had both feet in the stirrups before he burst from his hold. Snorting fiercely, he bucked and plunged until I thought the girths would have cracked, but other horsemen galloping past, enabled me to bustle him into full speed, and in five minutes he settled down into a long, luxurious stride, with his legs under his haunches, that felt like a common canter, but really devoured the way, and swept me past everything on the road. Up hill and down, he bounded like a machine full of power on the softest of steel springs.

"Ten miles were soon past, and we reached Holywell ; up the steep hill and through the town, and down the steep narrow lanes, we went, and reached the level road along the shore leading to Flint without halt, until within two miles of that town : then I drew bridle, to walk in cool.

"By this time the weather, which had been bright all day, had changed ; a few heat drops of rain fell, thunder was heard rolling in the distance, and a wind seemed rising and murmuring from the sea.

"I looked at my watch as we entered the town ; it was an hour past the time when I intended to have crossed—but Laura must not be disappointed ; so I only halted at the inn long enough to let the brown wash his mouth out, and, without dismounting,

rode on to the guide's house. As I passed the Castle, I heard a band playing; it was a party of officers, with their friends, who had come up on a pic-nic from Chester.

"When I reached the cottage of old David, the guide, he was sitting on the bench at the door, putting on his shoes and stockings; and part of the party I had met in the morning, as they passed, cried, 'You're late, master; you must hurry on to cross to-night.' David was beginning to dissuade me; but when I threw him a shilling, and trotted on, he followed me down to the beach.

" 'You must make haste, master, for the wind's getting up, and will bring the tide like a roaring lion—it will. But I suppose the pretty lady with the rosy face expects you. But where's the red horse? I wish you had him. I do not like strange horses on such a time as this—indeed, and I do not,' he added. But I had no time for explanations, although David was a great ally of ours. I knew I was expected, it was getting dusk, and Laura would be anxious—I *hoped*.

"Pushing briskly along, we soon reached the ford of the channel, so calm and shallow in the morning, but now filling fast with the tide; dark clouds were covering the sky, and the wind brought up a hollow, murmuring sound.

" 'Now get across, young gentleman, as fast as you can, and keep your eyes on the windmill, and don't spare your spurs, and you will have plenty of time; so good evening, God bless you! young gentleman, and the pretty lady, too,' cried David, honestest of Welsh guides.

"I tried to walk the brown horse through the ford where it was not more than three or four feet deep; but he first refused; then, when pressed, plunged


fiercely in, and was out of his depth in a moment. He swam boldly enough, but obstinately kept his head down the stream : so that, instead of landing on an easy, shelving shore, he came out where all but a perpendicular bank of soft sand had to be leaped and climbed over. After several unsuccessful efforts, I was obliged to slip off, and struggle up on foot, side by side with my horse, holding on by the flap of the saddle. If I had not dismounted, we should have rolled back together.

“ When I reached the top of the bank, rather out of breath, I looked back, and saw David making piteous signs, while he moved off rapidly, for me to push along. But this was easier said than done; the brown horse would not let me come near him. Round and round he went, rearing and plunging, until I was quite exhausted. Coaxing and threatening were alike useless; every moment it was getting darker. Once I thought of letting the brute go, and swimming back to David. But when I looked at the stream, and thought of Laura, that idea was dismissed. Another tussle, in which we ploughed up the sand in a circle, was equally fruitless, and I began to think he would keep me there to be drowned, for to cross to Parkgate on foot before the tide came up strong, seemed hopeless. At length, finding I could not get to touch his shoulder, I seized the opportunity, when he was close to the bank of the stream, and catching the curb sharply in both hands, backed him half-way down almost into the water. Before he had quite struggled up to the top, I threw myself into the saddle, and was carried off at the rate of thirty miles an hour towards the sea.

“ But I soon gathered up the reins, and, firm in my seat, turned my Tartar’s head towards the point

where I could see the white windmill gleaming through the twilight on the Cheshire shore.

"I felt that I had not a moment to spare. The sand, so firm in the morning, sounded damp under my horse's stride; the little stagnant pools filled visibly, and joining formed shallow lakes, through which we dashed in a shower of spray; every now and then we leaped over, or plunged into deep holes. At first I tried to choose a path, but as it rapidly grew darker, I sat back in my saddle, and with my eyes fixed on the tower of the windmill, held my horse firmly in a hand gallop, and kept a straight line. He was a famous deep-chested long-striding little fellow, and bounded along as fresh as when I started. By degrees my spirits began to rise; I thought the danger past; I felt confidence in myself and horse, and shouted to him in encouraging triumph. Already I was, in imagination, landed and relating my day's adventures to Laura, when with a heavy plunge down on his head, right over went the brown stallion, and away I flew as far as the reins, fortunately fast grasped, would let me. Blinded with wet sand, startled, shaken, confused, by a sort of instinct I scrambled to my feet almost as soon as my horse, which had fallen over a set of salmon-net stakes. Even in the instant of my fall, all the horror of my situation was mentally visible to me. In a moment I lived years. I felt that I was a dead man; I wondered if my body would be found; I thought of what my friends would say; I thought of letters in my desk I wished burned. I thought of relatives to whom my journey to Parkgate was unknown, of debts I wished paid, of parties with whom I had quarrelled, and wished I had been reconciled. I wondered whether Laura would mourn for me, whether she really loved me.



In fact, the most serious and ridiculous thoughts were jumbled all together; I muttered, once or twice, a hasty prayer; and yet I did not lose a moment in remounting. This time my horse made no resistance, but stood in a deep pool of salt water, and trembled and snorted—not fiercely, but in fear. There was no time to spare. I looked round for the dark line of the shore; it had sunk in the twilight. I looked again for the white tower; it had disappeared. The fall, and the rolling and turning of the horse in rising, had confused all my notions of the points of the compass. I could not tell whether it was the dark clouds from the sea, or the dizzy whirling of my brain; but it seemed to have become black night in a moment.

“The water flowed in all directions round and round. I tried, but could not tell which was the sea, and which the river side. The wind, too, seemed to shift and blow from all points of the compass.

“Then, ‘Softly,’ I said to myself, ‘be calm; you are confused by terror; be a man;’ and pride came to my rescue. I closed my eyes for a moment, and whispered, ‘O Lord, save me.’ Then with an effort, calmer, as though I had gulped down something, I opened my eyes, stood up in my stirrups and peered into the darkness. As far as I could see, were patches of water eating up the dry bits of sand; as far as I could hear, a rushing tide was on all sides. Four times, in different directions, I pushed on, and stopped when I found the water rising over the shoulders of my horse.

“I drew up on a sort of island of sand, which was every minute growing less, and gathering all the strength of my lungs, shouted again and again, and then listened; but there came no answering shout.

Suddenly, a sound of music came floating past me. I could distinguish the air; it was the military band playing 'Home, sweet Home.' I tried to gather from what quarter the sound came; but each time the wind instruments brayed out loudly, the sounds seemed to roll to me from a different direction. 'Ah! I shall see Home no more.' I could have wept, but I had no time; my eyes were staring through the darkness, and my horse plunging and rearing, gave me no rest for tears. I gave him his head once, having heard that horses, from ships sunk at sea, have reached land distant ten miles, by instinct; but the alternation of land and shallow and deep water confused his senses, and destroyed the calm power which might have been developed in the mere act of swimming.

"At length, after a series of vain efforts, I grew calm and resigned. I made up my mind to die. I took my handkerchief from my neck, and tied my pocket-book to the D's of the saddle. I pulled my rings off my fingers, and put them in my pocket—I had heard of wreckers cutting off the fingers of drowned men. These preparations made for death, I was on the point of dashing forward at random, when some inward feeling made me cast another steady glance all round. At that moment, just behind me, something sparkled twice, and disappeared, and then reappearing, shone faintly, but so steadily, that there could be no doubt that it was a light on the Cheshire shore. In an instant, my horse's head was turned round, I gathered him together, dug in the spurs, cried from the bottom of my heart, 'Thank God!' and in the same moment, not profanely, but with a horseman's instinct, shouted encouragingly, and dashed away towards the light. It was a hard fight; the ground seemed melting from under us—now

struggling through soft sand, now splashing over hard—now swimming (that was easy), and now and again leaping and half falling, but never losing hold of my horse or sight of the beacon, we forced through every obstacle, until at length the water grew shallower and shallower; we reached the sand, and passing the sand, rattled over the shingle of high-water mark—and I was saved! But I did not, could not stop; up the loose shingle I pressed on to the light that had saved me. I could not rest one instant, even for thanksgiving, until I knew to what I owed my safety. I drew up at a fisherman's hut of the humblest kind, built on the highest part of the shore; a light, which seemed faint when close to it, twinkled from a small latticed window. I threw myself from my horse, and knocked loudly at the door, and, as I knocked, fumbled with one hand in my soaked pocket for my purse. Twice I knocked again, and the door, which was unhasped, flew open. A woman, weeping bitterly, arose at this rude summons; and at the same moment I saw on the table the small coffin of a young child, with a rushlight burning at either end. I owed my life to death!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE GENTLEMAN.

THE evening after the Civilian's story, we found ourselves, as usual, assembled at dusk, more greedy for stories than when we begun; we were like school-girls corrupted by a course of circulating library reading. It was quite plain that, until the rains ceased, and the river, subsiding, released half our guests, the tale-telling must go on. After one or two vain efforts in other quarters, I turned to Fleme and Quickset, two smart young solicitors, who had been making a tour through the Colonies, armed with powers of attorney against defaulting debtors whom they could never find, and so were always pursuing, wherever anything new, strange, or amusing was to be found. The Civilian had picked them up on the road, and brought them with him on the strength of some very fine tobacco.

Mr. Fleme, when appealed to, answered that he had no adventures of his own to tell; but, he added, "I will try to repeat one of the favourite stories of old David Discount (often heard at his Saturdays' suppers) in his own way. Imagine, if you please, a smooth-shaven, almost venerable gentleman, a cross between a bishop and a stock-jobber, bald-headed, gray, with a benevolent forehead, and dangerous mouth and eyes, clad in sleek sober black and spotless lawn. Imagine him speaking with his gold snuff-box in his left hand, and gently waving the other, white and soft, on which a diamond ring sparkled like the one eye of Cyclops."

THE GENTLEMAN BEGGAR.

One morning, about five years ago, I called by appointment on Mr. John Balance, the fashionable pawnbroker, to accompany him to Liverpool, in pursuit of a levanting customer—for Balance, in addition to pawnbroking, does a little business in the sixty per cent. line. It rained in torrents when the cab stopped at the passage which leads past the pawning-boxes to his private door. The cabman rang twice, and at length Balance appeared, looming through the mist and rain in the entry, illuminated by his perpetual cigar. As I eyed him rather impatiently, remembering that trains wait for no man, something like a hairy dog, or a bundle of rags, rose up at his feet and barred his passage for a moment. Then Balance cried out with an exclamation, in answer apparently to something I could not hear, "What, man alive!—slept in the passage!—there, take that, and get some breakfast, for Heaven's sake!" So saying, he jumped into the "Hansom," and we bowled away at ten miles an hour, just catching the Express as the doors of the station were closing. My curiosity was full set,—for although Balance can be free with his money, it is not exactly to beggars that his generosity is usually displayed; so when comfortably ensconced in a *coupé*, I finished with—

"You are liberal with your money this morning: pray, how often do you give silver to street cadgers?—because I shall know now what walk to take when flats and sharps leave off buying law."

Balance, who would have made an excellent parson if he had not been bred to a case-hardening trade, and has still a soft bit left in his heart that is always fighting with his hard head, did not smile at

all, but looked as grim as if squeezing a lemon into his Saturday night's punch. He answered slowly, "A cadger—yes; a beggar—a miserable wretch he is now; but let me tell you, Master David, that that miserable bundle of rags was born and bred a gentleman; the son of a nobleman, the husband of an heiress, and has sat and dined at tables where you and I, Master David, are only allowed to view the plate by favour of the butler. I have lent him thousands, and been well paid. The last thing I had from him was his court suit; and I hold now his bill for one hundred pounds that will be paid, I expect, when he dies."

"Why, what nonsense you are talking! you must be dreaming this morning. However, we are alone, I'll light a weed in defiance of Railway law, you shall spin that yarn; for, true or untrue, it will fill up the time to Liverpool."

"As for yarn," replied Balance, "the whole story is short enough; and as for truth, that you may easily find out, if you like to take the trouble. I thought the poor wretch was dead, and I own it put me out meeting him this morning, for I had a curious dream last night."

"Oh, hang your dreams! tell us about this gentleman beggar that bleeds you of half-crowns—that melts the heart even of a pawnbroker!"

"Well, then, that beggar is the illegitimate son of the late Marquess of Hoopborough by a Spanish lady of rank. He received a first-rate education, and was brought up in his father's house. At a very early age he obtained an appointment in a public office, was presented by the Marquess at court, and received into the first society, where his handsome person and agreeable manners made him a great favourite. Soon after coming of age, he mar-

ried the daughter of Sir E. Bumper, who brought him a very handsome fortune, which was strictly settled on herself. They lived in splendid style, kept several carriages, a house in town, and a place in the country. For some reason or other, idleness, or to please his lady's pride he said, he resigned his appointment. His father died, and left him nothing; indeed, he seemed at that time very handsomely provided for.

"Very soon Mr. and Mrs. Molinos Fitz-Roy began to disagree. She was cold, correct—he was hot and random. He was quite dependent on her, and she made him feel it. When he began to get into debt, he came to me. At length some shocking quarrel occurred; some case of jealousy on the wife's side—not without reason, I believe; and the end of it was, Mr. Fitz-Roy was turned out of doors. The house was his wife's, the furniture was his wife's, and the fortune was his wife's—he was, in fact, her pensioner. He left with a few hundred pounds in ready money, and some personal jewellery, and went to an hotel. On these and credit he lived. Being illegitimate, he had no relations; being a fool, when he spent his money he lost his friends. The world took his wife's part, when they found she had the fortune, and the only parties who interfered were her relatives, who did their best to make the quarrel incurable. To crown all, one night he was run over by a cab, was carried to a hospital, and lay there for months, and was during several weeks of the time unconscious. A message to the wife, by the hands of one of his debauched companions, sent by a humane surgeon, obtained an intimation that 'if he died, Mr. Croak, the undertaker to the family, had orders to see to the funeral,' and that Mrs. Molinos was on the point of starting for the Continent, not

to return for some years. When Fitz-Roy was discharged he came to me, limping on two sticks, to pawn his court suit, and told me his story. I was really sorry for the fellow, such a handsome thoroughbred-looking man. He was going then into the west somewhere, to try to hunt out a friend. 'What to do, Balance,' he said, 'I don't know. I can't dig, and unless somebody will make me his gamekeeper, I must starve or beg, as my Jezebel bade me when we parted!'

"I lost sight of Molinos for a long time, and when I next came upon him it was in the Rookery of Westminster, in a low lodging-house, where I was searching with an officer for stolen goods. He was pointed out to me as 'the gentleman cadger,' because he was so free with his money when 'in luck.' He recognised me, but turned away then. I have since seen him, and relieved him more than once, although he never asks for anything. How he lives, Heaven knows. Without money, without friends, without useful education of any kind, he tramps about the country, as you saw him, perhaps doing a little hop-picking or hay-making, in season, only happy when he obtains the means to get drunk. I have heard through the kitchen whispers that you know come to me, that he is entitled to some property; and I expect if he were to die his wife would pay the hundred pound bill I hold; at any rate, what I have told you I know to be true, and the bundle of rags I relieved just now is known in every thieves' lodging in England as 'the gentleman cadger.'"

This story produced an impression on me—I am fond of speculation, and like the excitement of a legal hunt as much as some do a fox-chase. A

gentleman a beggar, a wife rolling in wealth, rumours of unknown property due to the husband: it seemed as if there were pickings for me amidst this carrion of pauperism.

Before returning from Liverpool, I had purchased the gentleman beggar's acceptance from Balance. I then inserted in the "Times" the following advertisement:—"Horatio Molinos Fitz-Roy. —If this gentleman will apply to David Discount, Esq., Solicitor, St. James's, he will hear of something to his advantage. Any person furnishing Mr. F.'s correct address, shall receive 1*l.* 1*s.* reward. He was last seen," &c. Within twenty-four hours I had ample proof of the wide circulation of the "Times." My office was besieged with beggars of every degree, men and women, lame and blind, Irish, Scotch, and English, some on crutches, some in bowls, some in go-carts. They all knew him as "the gentleman," and I must do the regular fraternity of tramps the justice to say, that not one would answer a question until he made certain that I meant the "gentleman" no harm.

One evening, about three weeks after the appearance of the advertisement, my clerk announced "another beggar." There came in an old man leaning upon a staff, clad in a soldier's great coat all patched and torn, with a battered hat, from under which a mass of tangled hair fell over his shoulders and half concealed his face. The beggar, in a weak, wheezy, hesitating tone, said, "You have advertised for Molinos Fitz-Roy. I hope you don't mean him any harm; he is sunk, I think, too low for enmity now; and surely no one would sport with such misery as his." These last words were uttered in a sort of piteous whisper.

I answered quickly, "Heaven forbid I should sport with misery: I mean and hope to do him good, as well as myself."

"Then, sir, I am Molinos Fitz-Roy!"

While we were conversing candles had been brought in. I have not very tender nerves—my trade would not agree with them—but I own I started and shuddered when I saw and knew that the wretched creature before me was under thirty years of age, and once a gentleman. Sharp, aquiline features, reduced to literal skin and bone, were begrimed and covered with dry fair hair; the white teeth of the half-open mouth chattered with eagerness, and made more hideous the foul pallor of the rest of the countenance. As he stood leaning on a staff, half bent, his long, yellow, bony fingers clasped over the crutch-head of his stick, he was indeed a picture of misery, famine, squalor, and premature age, too horrible to dwell upon. I made him sit down, sent for some refreshment, which he devoured like a ghoul, and set to work to unravel his story. It was difficult to keep him to the point; but with pains I learned what convinced me that he was entitled to some property, whether great or small there was no evidence. On parting, I said "Now, Mr. F., you must stop in town while I make proper inquiries. What allowance will be enough to keep you comfortably?"

"He answered humbly, after much pressing, "Would you think ten shillings too much?"

I don't like, if I do these things at all, to do them shabbily, so I said, "Come every Saturday, and you shall have a pound." He was profuse in thanks, of course, as all such men are as long as distress lasts.

I had previously learned that my ragged client's

wife was in England, living in a splendid house in Hyde Park Gardens, under her maiden name. On the following day the Earl of Owington called upon me, wanting five thousand pounds by five o'clock the same evening. It was a case of life or death with him, so I made my terms, and took advantage of his pressure to execute a *coup de main*. I proposed that he should drive me home to receive the money, calling at Mrs. Molinos in Hyde Park Gardens, on our way. I knew that the coronet and liveries of his father, the Marquess, would ensure me an audience with Mrs. Molinos Fitz-Roy.

My scheme answered. I was introduced into the lady's presence. She was, and probably is, a very stately, handsome woman, with a pale complexion, high solid forehead, regular features, thin, pinched, self-satisfied mouth. My interview was very short. I plunged into the middle of the affair, but had scarcely mentioned the word husband, when she interrupted me with, "I presume you have lent this profligate person money, and want me to pay you." She paused, and then said, "He shall not have a farthing." As she spoke, her white face became scarlet.

"But, madam, the man is starving. I have strong reasons for believing he is entitled to property, and if you refuse any assistance, I must take other measures." She rang the bell, wrote something rapidly on a card, and, as the footman appeared, pushed it towards me across the table, with the air of touching a toad, saying, "There, sir, is the address of my solicitors; apply to them if you think you have any claim." I had nothing left but to bow and take my leave.

So far I had effected nothing; and, to tell the truth, felt rather crest-fallen under the influence of

that grand manner peculiar to certain grand ladies and to all great actresses.

My next visit was to the attorneys, Messrs. Leasem and Fashun, of Lincoln's Inn Square, and there I was at home. I had had dealings with the firm before. They are agents for half the aristocracy, who always run in crowds like sheep after the same wine-merchants, the same architects, the same horse-dealers, and the same law-agents. It may be doubted whether the quality of law and land management they get on this principle is quite equal to their wine and horses. At any rate, my friends of Lincoln's Inn, like others of the same class, are distinguished by their courteous manners, deliberate proceedings, innocence of legal technicalities, long credit, and heavy charges. Leasem, the elder partner, wears powder and a huge bunch of seals, lives in Queen Square, drives a brougham, gives the dinners, and does the cordial department. He is so strict in performing the latter duty, that he once addressed a poacher, who had shot a Duke's keeper, as "my dear creature," although he afterwards hung him.

Fashun has chambers in St. James's Street, drives a cab, wears a tip, and does the grand ha-ha style.

My business lay with Leasem. The interviews and letters passing were numerous. However, it came at last to the following dialogue:—

"Well, my dear Mr. Discount," began Mr. Leasem, who hates me like poison. "I'm really very sorry for that poor dear Molinos—knew his father well—a great man, a perfect gentleman; but you know what women are, eh! Mr. Discount? My client won't advance a shilling, she knows it would only be wasted in low dissipation. Now don't you think (this was said very

insinuatingly)—don't you think he had better be sent to the workhouse ; very comfortable accommodation there, I can assure you—meat twice a week, and excellent soup ; and then, Mr. D., we might consider about allowing you something for that bill."

"Mr. Leasem, can you reconcile it to your conscience to make such an arrangement. Here's a wife rolling in luxury, and a husband starving !"

"No, Mr. Discount, not starving ; there is the workhouse, as I observed before ; besides, allow me to suggest that these appeals to feeling are quite unprofessional—quite unprofessional."

"But, Mr. Leasem, touching this property which the poor man is entitled to."

"Why, there again, Mr. D., you must excuse me ; you really must. I don't say he is, I don't say he is not. If you know he is entitled to property, I am sure you know how to proceed ; the law is open to you, Mr. Discount—the law is open ; and a man of your talent will know how to use it."

"Then, Mr. Leasem, you mean that I must, in order to right this starving man, file a Bill of Discovery, to extract from you the particulars of his rights. You have the Marriage Settlement, and all the information, and you decline to allow a pension or afford any information ; the man is to starve, or go to the workhouse ?"

"Why, Mr. D., you are so quick and violent, it really is not professional ; but, you see (here a subdued smile of triumph), it has been decided that a solicitor is not bound to afford such information as you ask, to the injury of his client."

"Then you mean that this poor Molinos may rot and starve, while you keep secret from him, at his wife's request, his title to an income, and that the Court of Chancery will back you in this iniquity ?"

I kept repeating the word "starve," because I saw it made my respectable opponent wince. "Well, then, just listen to me. I know that in the happy state of our equity law, Chancery can't help my client; but I have another plan; I shall go hence to my office, issue a writ, and take your client's husband in execution—as soon as he is lodged in jail, I shall file his schedule in the insolvent Court, and when he comes up for his discharge, I shall put you in the witness-box, and examine you on oath, 'touching any property of which you know the insolvent to be possessed,' and where will be your privileged communications then?"

The respectable Leasem's face lengthened in a twinkling, his comfortable confident air vanished, he ceased twiddling his gold chain, and at length he muttered, "Suppose we pay the debt?"

"Why then I'll arrest him the day after for another."

"But, my dear Mr. Discount, surely such conduct would not be quite respectable?"

"That's my business; my client has been wronged, I am determined to right him; and when the aristocratic firm of Leasem and Fashun takes refuge, according to the custom of respectable repudiators, in the cool arbores of the Court of Chancery, why, a mere bill-discounting attorney like David Discount need not hesitate about cutting a bludgeon out of the Insolvent Court."

"Well, well, Mr. D., you are so warm, so fiery; we must deliberate, we must consult. You will give me until the day after to-morrow, and then we'll write you our final determination; in the mean time, send us a copy of your authority to act for Mr. Molinos Fitz-Roy."

Of course I lost no time in getting the gentleman beggar to sign a proper letter.

On the appointed day came a communication with the L. and F. seal, which I opened not without unprofessional eagerness. It was as follows :

"In re Molinos Fitz-Roy and Another.

"Sir,—In answer to your application on behalf of Mr. Molinos Fitz-Roy, we beg to inform you that under the administration of the estate of Lydia Bumper, spinster, and aunt of Mrs. Molinos, who died intestate, your client is entitled to two thousand five hundred pounds eight shillings and sixpence, Three per Cents. ; one thousand five hundred pounds nineteen shillings and fourpence, Three per Cents. Reduced ; one thousand pounds, Long Annuities ; five hundred pounds, Bank Stock ; three thousand five hundred pounds, India Stock," (and a list of other securities, making up about ten thousand pounds), which, their letter ran on to say, "we are prepared to transfer over to Mr. Molinos Fitz-Roy's direction forthwith.

"We are, your obedient servants,

"L. & F."

Here was a windfall ! It quite took away my breath.

At dusk came my gentleman beggar ; and what puzzled me was, how to break the news to him. Being very much overwhelmed with business that day, I had not much time for consideration. He was rather better dressed than when I first saw him, with only a week's beard on his chin ; but, as usual, not quite sober. Six weeks had elapsed since our first interview. He was still the humble, trembling, low-voiced creature I first knew him.

After a prelude, I said, "I find, Mr. F., you are entitled to something; pray, what do you mean to give me in addition to my bill for obtaining it?" He answered rapidly, "Oh, take half: if there is one hundred pounds, take half: if there is five hundred pounds, take half."

"No, no; Mr. F., I don't do business in that way, I shall be satisfied with ten per cent."

It was so settled. I then led him out into the street, impelled to tell him the news, yet dreading the effect; not daring to make the revelation in my office, for fear of a scene.

I began hesitatingly, "Mr. Fitz-Roy, I am happy to say I find that you are entitled to"—here the dreadful intentness of his eyes upset my presence of mind, and I blurted out "ten thousand pounds!"

"Ten thousand pounds!" he echoed. "Ten thousand pounds!" he shrieked. "Ten thousand pounds!" he yelled; seizing my arm violently. "You are a brick.—Here, cab! cab!" Several drove up—the shout might have been heard a mile off. He jumped into the first.

"Where to?" said the driver.

"To a tailor's, you d——, you, ah, ah, ah!"

"Ten thousand pounds! ah, ah, ah!" he repeated hysterically, when in the cab; and every moment grasping my arm. Presently he subsided, looking me straight in the face, and muttered with agonising fervour, "You are a brick, by G—, a brick,—ten thousand pounds!—ah, ah, ah!—a brick, by G—, a brick!"

The tailor, the hosier, the bootmaker, the hair-dresser, were in turn visited by this poor pagan of externals. As by degrees under their hands he emerged from the beggar to the gentleman, his spirits rose; his eyes brightened; he walked erect,

yet always nervously grasping my arm ; fearing, apparently, to lose sight of me for a moment, lest his fortune should vanish with me. The impatient pride with which he gave his order to the astonished tradesmen for the finest and best of everything, and the amazed air of the fashionable hairdresser when he presented his matted locks and stubble chin to be "cut and shaved," may be *acted*—it cannot be described.

By the time the external transformation was complete, and I sat down in a *café* in the Haymarket opposite a haggard but handsome thoroughbred-looking man, whose air, with the exception of the wild eyes and deeply browned face, did not differ from the stereotyped men about town sitting around us, Mr. Molinos Fitz-Roy had already almost forgotten the past ; he bullied the waiter, and criticised the wine, as if he had done nothing else but dine and drink and scold there all the days of his life.

Once he wished to drink my health, and would have proclaimed his whole story to the coffee-room assembly, in a raving style. When I left, he almost wept in terror at the idea of losing sight of me. But, allowing for these ebullitions—the natural result of such a whirl of events—he was wonderfully calm and self-possessed.

The next day, his first care was to distribute fifty pounds among his friends the cadgers, at a house of call in Westminster, and formally to dissolve his connection with them ; those present undertaking for the "fraternity," that for the future he should never be noticed by them in public or private.

I cannot follow his career much further. Adversity had taught him nothing. He was soon again surrounded by the well-bred vampires who had for-

gotten him when penniless ; but they amused him, and that was enough. The ten thousand pounds were rapidly melting when he invited me to a grand dinner at Richmond, which included a dozen of the most agreeable, good-looking, well-dressed dandies of London, interspersed with a display of pretty butterfly bonnets. We dined deliciously, and drank as men do of iced wines in the dog-days—looking down from Richmond Hill.

One of the pink bonnets crowned Fitz-Roy with a wreath of flowers ; he looked—less the intellect—as handsome as Alcibiades. Intensely excited and flushed, he rose with a champagne glass in his hand to propose my health.

The oratorical powers of his father had not descended on him. Jerking out sentences by spasms, at length he said, “ I was a beggar—I am a gentleman—thanks to this—”

Here he leaned on my shoulder heavily a moment, and then fell back. We raised him, loosened his neckcloth—

“ Fainted ! ” said the ladies.

“ Drunk ! ” said the gentlemen.

He was *dead* !

CHAPTER XIII.

"COME, Quickset, you are a good mimic, you do the next."

THE FASHIONABLE FORGER.

I am an attorney and a bill-discounter. As it is my vocation to lend money at high interest to extravagant people, my connexion principally lies among "fools," sometimes among rogues "of quality." Mine is a pursuit which a prejudiced world either holds in sovereign contempt, or visits with envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness; but, to my mind, there are many callings, with finer names, that are no better. It gives me two things which I love—money and power; but I cannot deny that it brings with it a bad name. The case lies between character and money, and involves a matter of taste. Some people like character; I prefer money.

If I am hated and despised, I chuckle over the "per contra." I find it pleasant for members of a proud aristocracy to condescend from their high estate to fawn, feign, flatter; to affect even mirthful familiarity in order to gain my good-will. I am no Shylock. No client can accuse me of desiring either his flesh or his blood. Sentimental vengeance is no item in my stock in trade. Gold and bank-notes satisfy my "rage;" or, if need be, a good mortgage. Far from seeking revenge, the worst defaulter I ever had dealings with cannot deny that I am always willing to accept a good post-obit.

I say again, I am daily brought in contact with

all ranks of society, from the poverty-stricken patentee to the peer; and I am no more surprised at receiving an application from a duchess than from a pet opera-dancer. In my ante-room wait, at this moment, a crowd of borrowers. Among the men, beardless folly and moustachioed craft are most prominent: there is a handsome young fellow, with an elaborate cane and wonderfully vacant countenance, who is anticipating, in feeble follies, an estate that has been in the possession of his ancestors since the reign of Harry the Eighth. There is a hairy, high-nosed, broken-down non-descript, in appearance something between a horse-dealer and a pugilist. He is an old Etonian. Five years ago he drove his four in hand; he is now waiting to beg a sovereign, having been just discharged from the Insolvent Court, for the second time. Among the women is a pretty actress, who, a year since, looked forward to a supper of steak and onions, with bottled stout, on a Saturday night, as a great treat; now she finds one hundred pounds a month insufficient to pay her wine-merchant and her confectioner. So I am obliged to deal with each case according to its peculiarities. Genuine undeserved Ruin seldom knocks at my door. Mine is a perpetual battle with people who imbibe trickery at the same rate as they dissolve their fortunes. I am a hard man, of course. I should not be fit for my pursuit if I were not; but when, by a remote chance, honest misfortune pays me a visit, as Rothschild amused himself at times by giving a beggar a guinea, so I occasionally treat myself to the luxury of doing a kind action.

My favourite subjects for this unnatural generosity are, the very young, or the poor, innocent, helpless people, who are unfit for the war of life. Many among my clients (especially those tempered in the

“ice-brook” of fashion and high life—polished and passionless) would be too much for me, if I had not made the face, the eye, the accent, as much my study as the mere legal and financial points of discount. To show what I mean, I will relate what happened to me not long since :—

One day, a middle aged man, in the usual costume of a West-end shopman, who had sent in his name as Mr. Axminster, was shown into my private room. After a little hesitation, he said, “Although you do not know me, living at this end of the town, I know you very well by reputation, and that you discount bills. I have a bill here which I want to get discounted. I am in the employ of Messrs. Russle and Smooth. The bill is drawn by one of our best customers, the Hon. Miss Snaffleton, niece of Lord Blimley, and accepted by Major Mumchance, whom, no doubt, you know by name. She has dealt with us for some years, is very, very extravagant, but always pays.” He put the acceptance—which was for two hundred pounds—into my hands.

I looked at it as scrutinisingly as I usually do at such paper. The Major’s signature was familiar to me ; but having succeeded to a great estate, he has long ceased to be a customer. I instantly detected a forgery ; by whom ? was the question. Could it be the man before me ?—experience told me no.

Perhaps there was something in the expression of my countenance which Mr. Axminster did not like, for he said, “It is good for the amount, I presume ?”

I replied, “Pray sir, from whom did you get this bill ?”

“From Miss Snaffleton herself.”

Have you circulated any other bills made by the same drawer ?”

“O yes !” said the draper, without hesitation ;

"I have paid away a bill for one hundred pounds to Mr. Sparkle, the jeweller, to whom Miss Snaffleton owed twenty pounds. He gave me the difference."

"And how long has that bill to run now?"

"About a fortnight."

"Did you endorse it?"

"I did," continued the shopman. "Mr. Sparkle required me to do so, to show that the bill came properly into his possession."

"This second bill, you say, is urgently required to enable Miss Snaffleton to leave town?"

"Yes; she is going to Brighton for the winter."

I gave Mr. Axminster a steady, piercing look of inquiry. "Pray, sir," I said, "could you meet that one hundred pound bill, supposing it should not be paid by the acceptor?"

"Meet it!" The poor fellow wiped from his forehead the perspiration which suddenly broke out at the bare hint of a probability that the bill would be dishonoured: "Meet it! Oh no! I am a married man, with a family, and have nothing but my salary to depend on."

"Then the sooner you get it taken up, and the less you have to do with Miss Snaffleton's bill affairs the better."

"She has always been punctual hitherto."

"That may be." I pointed to the cross-writing on the document, and said deliberately—"This bill is a forgery!"

At these words the poor man turned pale. He snatched up the document, and, with many coherent protestations, was rushing towards the door, when I called to him, in an authoritative tone, to stop. He paused; his manner indicating not only doubt, but fear. I said to him, "Don't flurry yourself; I only want to serve you. You tell me that you are

a married man with children, dependent on daily labour for daily bread, and that you have done a little discounting for Miss Snaffleton out of your earnings. Now, although I am a bill discounteer, I don't like to see such men victimised. Look at the body of this bill, look at the signature of your lady customer, the drawer. Don't you detect the same fine, thin, sharp-pointed hand-writing in the words, 'Accepted, Dymmock Mumchance.'"

The man, convinced against his will, was at first overcome. When he recovered, he raved: he would expose the Honourable Miss Snaffleton, if it cost him his bread—he would go at once to the police office.

I stopped him by saying, roughly, "Don't be a fool. Any such steps would seal your ruin. Take my advice; return the bill to the lady, saying simply, that you cannot get it discounted. Leave the rest to me, and I think the bill you have endorsed to Sparkle will be paid." Comforted by this assurance, Axminster, fearfully changed from the nervous but smug hopeful man of the morning, departed.

It now remained for me to exert what skill I own, to bring about the desired result. I lost no time in writing a letter to the Honourable Miss Snaffleton, of which the following is a copy:—

"Madam,—A bill, purporting to be drawn by you, has been offered to me for discount. There is something wrong about it; and, though a stranger to you, I advise you to lose no time in getting it back into your own hands.—D. D."

I intended to deal with the affair quietly, and without any view to profit. The fact is, that I was sorry—you may laugh—but I really *was* sorry to think that a young girl might have given way to

temptation under pressure of pecuniary difficulties. If it had been a man's case, I doubt whether I should have interfered.

By the return of post a lady's maid entered my room, profusely decorated with ringlets, lace, and perfumed with *patchouli*. She brought a letter from her mistress. It ran thus :—

"Sir,—I cannot sufficiently express my thanks for your kindness in writing to me on the subject of the bill, of which I had also heard a few hours previously. As a perfect *stranger* to you, I cannot estimate your kind consideration at too high a value. I trust the matter will be explained ; but I should much like to see you. If you would be kind enough to write a note as soon as you receive this, I will order it to be sent to me at once to Tyburn Square. I will wait on you at any hour on Friday you may appoint. I believe that I am not mistaken in supposing that you transact business for my friend Sir John Markham, and you will therefore know the enclosed to be his handwriting. Again thanking you most gratefully, allow me to remain your much and deeply obliged, JULIANA SNAFFLETON."

This note was written upon delicate French paper, embossed with a coat-of-arms. It was in a fancy envelope : the whole richly perfumed, and redolent of fashion. Its contents were an implied confession of forgery.

Silence, or three lines of indignation, would have been the only innocent answer to my letter. But Miss Snaffleton thanked me. She let me know, by implication, that she was on intimate terms with a name good on a West-end bill. My answer was, that I should be alone on the following afternoon at five.

At the hour fixed, punctual to a moment, a brougham drew up at the corner of the street next

to my chambers. The Honourable Miss Snaffleton's card was handed in. Presently she entered, swimming into my room, richly yet simply dressed in the extreme of Parisian good taste. She was pale—rather colourless. She had fair hair, fine teeth, and a fashionable voice. She threw herself gracefully into the chair I handed to her, and began by uncoiling a string of phrases, that her visit was merely to consult me on “unavoidable pecuniary difficulties.”

According to my mode, I allowed her to talk; putting in only an occasional word of question, that seemed rather a random observation than a significant query. At length, after walking round and round the subject, like a timid horse in a field, round a groom with a sieve of oats, she came nearer and nearer the subject. When she had fairly approached the point, she stopped, as if courage had failed her. but she soon recovered, and observed—“I cannot think why you should take the trouble to write so to me, a perfect stranger.” Another pause:—“I wonder no one ever suspected me before.”

Here was a confession and a key to character. The cold gray eye, the thin compressed lips, which I had had time to observe, were true indexes to the “lady's” inner heart: selfish, calculating, utterly devoid of conscience; unable to conceive the existence of spontaneous kindness; utterly indifferent to anything except discovery—and almost indifferent to that, because convinced that no serious consequences could affect a lady of her rank and influence.

“Madam,” I replied, “as long as you dealt with tradesmen accustomed to depend on aristocratic customers, your rank and position, and their large profits, protected you from suspicion; but you have *made* a mistake in descending from your vantage

ground to make a poor shopman your innocent accomplice—a man who will be keenly alive to anything that may injure his wife or children. His terrors—but for my interposition—would have ruined you utterly. Tell me, how many of these things have you put afloat?”

She seemed a little taken aback by this speech, but was wonderfully firm. She passed her white jewelled hand over her eyes, seemed calculating, and then whispered with a confiding look of innocent helplessness, admirably assumed—

“About as many as amount to twelve hundred pounds.”

“And what means have you for meeting them?”

At this question, so plainly put, her face flushed. She half rose from her chair, and exclaimed, in the true tone of aristocratic *hauteur*—“Really, sir, I do not know what right you have to ask me that question.”

I laughed a little, though not very loud. It was rude, I own; but who could have helped it? I replied, speaking low, but slowly and distinctly:—“You forget. I did not send for you: you came to me. You have forged bills to the amount of twelve hundred pounds. Yours is not the case of a ruined merchant, or an ignorant, over-tempted clerk. In your case a jury” (she shuddered at that word) “would find no extenuating circumstances; and if you should ever fall into the hands of justice, you would be convicted, degraded, clothed in a prison dress, and transported for life. I do not want to speak harshly; but I insist that you find means to take up the bill which Mr. Axminster has so unwittingly endorsed!”

The Honourable Miss Snaffleton’s grand manner melted away. She wept. She seized and pressed

my hand. She cast up her eyes, full of tears, and went through the part of a repentant victim with great fervour. She would do anything; anything in the world to save the poor man. Indeed, she had intended to appropriate part of the two hundred pound bill to that purpose.

She forgot her first statement, that she wanted the money to go out of town. Without interrupting, I let her go on and degrade herself by a simulated passion of repentance, regret, and thankfulness to me, under which she hid her fear and her mortification at being detected. I at length put an end to a scene of admirable acting, by recommending her to go abroad immediately, to place herself out of reach of any sudden discovery, and then lay her case fully before her friends, who would, no doubt, feel bound to come forward with the full amount of the forged bills. "But," she exclaimed, with an entreating air, "I have no money; I cannot go without money!" To that observation I did not respond, although I am sure she expected that I should, check-book in hand, offer her a loan.

I do not say so without reason, for, the very next week, this honourable young lady came again; and, with sublime assurance, and a number of very charming, winning speeches (which might have had their effect upon a younger man), asked me to lend her one hundred pounds, in order that she might take the advice I had so obligingly given her, and retire into private life for a certain time in the country.

I do meet with a great many impudent people in the course of my calling—I am not very deficient in assurance myself—but this actually took away my breath.

"Really, madam," I answered, "you pay a very *ill* compliment to my gray hairs; and would fain

make me a very ill return for the service I have done you, when you ask me to lend a hundred pounds to a young lady who owns to having forged to the extent of one thousand two hundred pounds, and to owing eight hundred pounds besides.

"Oh!" she answered, quite unabashed, without a trace of the fearful, tender pleading of the previous week's interview—quite as if I had been an accomplice—"I can give you excellent security."

"That alters the case; I can lend any amount on good security."

"Well, sir, I can get the acceptances of three friends of ample means."

"Do you mean to tell me, Miss Snaffleton, that you will write down the names of three parties who will accept a bill for one hundred pounds for you?"

Yes, she could, and she did actually write down the names of three distinguished men. Now I knew for certain that not one of those noblemen would have put his name to a bill on any account whatever for his dearest friend; but, in her unabashed self-confidence, she thought of passing another forgery *on me*. I closed the conference by saying, "I cannot assist you;" and she retired with the air of an injured person. In the course of a few days I heard from Mr. Axminster that his liability of one hundred pounds had been duly honoured.

In my active and exciting life, one day extinguishes the recollection of the events of the preceding day; and, for a time, I thought no more about the fashionable forger. I had taken it for granted that, heartily frightened, although not repenting, she had paused in her felonious pursuits.

My business, one day, led me to the establishment of one of the most wealthy and respectable legal firms in the city, where I am well known, and,

I believe, valued ; for at all times I am most politely, I may say most cordially, received. Mutual profits create a wonderful freemasonry between those who have not any other sympathy or sentiment. Politics, religion, morality, difference of rank, are all equalised and republicanised by the division of an account. No sooner had I entered the *sanctum*, than the senior partner, Mr. Preceps, began to quiz his junior, Mr. Jones, with, "Well, Jones must never joke friend Discount any more about usury. Just imagine," he continued, addressing me, "Jones has himself been discounting a bill for a lady ; and a deuced pretty one too. He sat next her at dinner in Grosvenor Square last week. Next day she gave him a call here, and he could not refuse her extraordinary request. Gad, it is hardly fair for Jones to be poaching on your domains of West-end paper !"

Mr. Jones smiled quietly, as he observed, "Why, you see, she is the niece of one of our best clients ; and, really, I was so taken by surprise, that I did not know how to refuse."

"Pray," said I, interrupting his excuses, "does your young lady's name begin with S. ? Has she not a very pale face, and cold gray eye ?"

The partners stared.

"Ah ! I see it is so ; and can at once tell you that the bill is not worth a rush."

"Why, you don't mean— ?"

"I mean simply that the acceptance is, I'll bet you a whitebait dinner at Blackwall or Greenwich, a forgery."

"A forgery !"

"A forgery," I repeated, as distinctly as possible.

Mr. Jones hastily, and with broken ejaculations,

called for the cash-box. With trembling hands he took out the bill, and followed my finger with eager, watchful eyes, as I pointed out the proofs of my assertion.

A long pause was broken by my mocking laugh ; for, at the moment, my sense of politeness could not restrain my satisfaction at the signal defeat which had attended the first experiment of these highly respectable gentlemen in the science of usury.

The partners did not have recourse to the police. They did not propose a consultation with either Mr. Forrester or Mr. Field ; but they took certain steps, under my recommendation, the result of which was that, at an early day, an aunt of the Honourable Miss Snaffleton was driven, to save so near a connexion from transportation, to sell out some fourteen hundred pounds of stock, and all the forgeries were taken up.

One would have thought that the lady who had thus so narrowly escaped, had had enough ; but forgery, like opium-eating, is one of those charming vices which is never abandoned when once adopted. The forger enjoys not only the pleasure of obtaining money so easily, but the triumph of befooling sharp men of the world. Dexterous penmanship is a source of pride like that which animates the skilful rifle-man, the practised duellist, or the well-trained billiard-player. With a clean Gillot the forger fetches down a capitalist, at three or six months, for a cool hundred or a round thousand, just as a Pallisser drops over a grisly bear at ten, or a Gordon Cumming a monstrous male elephant at a hundred paces.

As I before observed, my connexion especially lies among the improvident—among those who will be ruined—who are being ruined—and who have been ruined. To the last class belongs Francis Fisherton, once a gentleman, now without a shilling or

a principle; but rich in mother-wit—a *farceur* after Paul de Kock's own heart. Having in bygone days been one of my willing victims, he now finds pleasure and profit in guiding others through the gate he frequented, as long as able to pay the tolls.

One day I received a note from him, to say that he would call on me at three o'clock the next day, to introduce a lady of family who wanted a bill "done" for one hundred pounds. So ordinary a transaction merely needed a memorandum in my diary, "Tuesday, 3 P.M.; F. F., 100*l.* Bill." The hour came and passed, but no Frank, which was strange—because every one must have observed, that, however dilatory people are in paying, they are wonderfully punctual when they expect to receive money.

At five o'clock in rushed my Jackal. His story, disentangled from oaths and ejaculations, amounted to this:—In answer to one of the advertisements he occasionally addresses "To the Embarrassed," in the columns of the "Times," he received a note from a lady, who said she was anxious to get a "bill done,"—the acceptance of a well-known man of rank and fashion. A correspondence was opened and an appointment made. At the hour fixed, neatly shaved, brushed, gloved, booted,—the revival, in short, of that high-bred Frank Fisherton who was so famous

"In his hot youth, when Crockford's was the thing,"

glowing with only one glass of brandy "just to steady his nerves," he met the lady at a West-end pastry-cook's.

After a few words (for all the material questions *had* been settled by correspondence) she stepped into her brougham and invited Frank to take a seat

beside her. Elated with a compliment of late years so rare, he commenced planning the orgies which were to reward him for weeks of enforced fasting, when the coachman, reverentially touching his hat, looked down from his seat for orders.

"To ninety-nine, George Street, St. James's," cried Fisherton, in his loudest tones.

In an instant the young lady's pale face changed to scarlet, and then to ghastly green. In a whisper, rising to a scream, she exclaimed, "Good heavens! you do not mean to *that* man's house" (meaning me). "Indeed, I cannot go to him, on any account; he is a most horrid man, I am told, and charges most extravagantly."

"Madam," answered Frank, in great perturbation, "I beg your pardon, but you have been grossly misinformed. I have known that excellent man these twenty years, and have paid him hundreds on hundreds; but never so much by ten per cent. as you offered me for discounting your bill."

"Sir, I cannot have anything to do with your friend." Then violently pulling the check-string, "Stop," she gasped; "and *will you* have the goodness to get out?"

"And so I got out," continued Fisherton, "and lost my time, and the heavy investment I made in getting myself up for the assignation; new primrose gloves, and a shilling to the hair-dresser—hang her! But did you ever know anything like the prejudices that must prevail against you? I am disgusted with human nature. Could you lend me half-a-sovereign till Saturday?"

I smiled. I sacrificed the half-sovereign and let him go, for he is not exactly the person to whom it was advisable to entrust all the secrets relating to the Honourable Miss Snaffleton.

CHAPTER XIV.

I VISIT ENGLAND.

THE rains ceased and the rivers sank into their ordinary insignificance ; the two lawyers, Fleme and Quickset, departed, leaving their tales behind for future use. Jenny Martyn presented the seedy sombrero to Quickset, and it now hangs a trophy in his hall at Clapham, on the horns of a Cape bullock which he knocked down at Table Bay with—a dollar. Jenny herself, thanks to a quick ear, began to touch the guitar with aggravating facility. It was time for us to leave the Martyns to undisturbed possession of their nest.

The missing messenger arrived, bringing the long expected letters. The first I opened, from my Sydney agent, was in the highest degree satisfactory. My wool had sold well. A venture in a whaling ship had turned out fortunate ; a lot of land in the suburbs of Sydney, which I had taken for a bad debt, had become a valuable corner lot, indispensable for Government use. All I touched seemed turning to gold. The next letter was from my sister Maria, full of pleasant affectionate chit chat. She had heard of me recently as steady and prospering. She urged me to pay England a visit ; and jokingly advised me to make the voyage to choose a wife, if not already engaged to some native lady ! Women have such odd notions ! In a postscript she added, “ by the by, I saw an old friend of yours the other

day, so grown and improved you would never know her—little Amy Clewer, the daughter of Reuben the huntsman. She is governess in Lord Holmesdale's family, and has just returned from a three years' tour with them on the Continent. We made acquaintance on the Ostend packet, returning from our Rhine trip."

That postscript set on fire the fuel of home sickness that I had been gathering for more than a year.

I was no longer a discontented turbulent boy; I was a successful man. My heart had changed. I thought tenderly of those whom I had left without regret. The pen, once so hateful, had become my favourite resource in hours of leisure; and I filled long letters with my thoughts, my feelings, my regrets. Books once neglected were learnt by heart. If in the morning I tired horses in my rounds, and settled pastoral strife with rude words and hard blows, in the evening, sitting apart, I was lost in the wanderings of Abraham; I mourned with the poet pastoral patriarch, and spoke aloud the word-painting of the war-horse. I followed St. John into the wilderness like that unrolled before my cottage; and I listened, far from cities, to the Sermon on the Mount. In other moods, I made the woods resound with the sonorous defiances of Homer's heroes, or the outbursts of Shakspeare's more heroic characters. No fiction these to me, for I myself was chief, warrior, priest; I led to the fight, I read the funeral service over the slain.

I was waked from dreams of fatherland by the howl of the dingoe prowling around my sheepfold; the defying bark of my watchful dogs; and sometimes, echoing from the mountain tops, the wild monotonous songs of aborigines, as they danced

and acted dramas of the slaughter of the white man and the plunder of his cattle.

When recalling the pleasant scenes of my boyish days with Reuben the huntsman, I most loved to dwell upon the Christmas time of dear old England.

On a hot summer evening of an Australian December, the great river that divided and bounded my pastures had dwindled to a string of pools, my cattle were panting around—the stars, shining with a brilliancy unknown in northern climes, realised the blessed night when the star of Bethlehem startled and guided the kings of the Eastern world on their awful pilgrimage,—my thoughts travelled across the waves to England. I did not feel the sultry heat, nor hear the cry of the night-bird or the howl of the dingoe. I was across the sea, among the Christmas revellers. I saw the gay flushed faces of my kindred and friends shining round the Christmas table; the grace was said, the toast went round. I heard my own name mentioned, and the gay faces grew sad. I awaked from my dream, found myself alone, and resolved that the time should come when on a Christmas-day, the toast “*to absent friends*” should be answered by the Australian himself.

The time did come. Earnest labour and sober economy prospered with me. The rich district in which I was one of the earliest pioneers, had become settled and pacified, as far as the river ran; the wild Myals had grown into the tame, blanket-clothed dependents of the settlers. Thousands of fine-woolled flocks upon the hills, and cattle upon the rich flats, were mine; the bark hut had changed into a verandahed cottage, where books and pictures formed no insignificant part of the furniture; neighbours were within a ride; the voices of children often floated sweetly along the waters of the river.

* * * * *

It was mid-winter when I landed at a small fishing village in the extreme west of England; for my impatience made me take advantage, during a calm in the Channel, of the first fisher's boat that boarded us.

The nearer we approached the shore, the more impatient I grew to land. I insisted on giving my help to pull one of the heavy oars; and no sooner had we touched the ground, than, throwing myself into the water, I waded on shore. Oh, easy-going men of the great world, there are some pleasures you can never taste; and among them the enthusiasm, the heartfelt awe-stricken admiration of the dweller among pastoral plains when he finds himself once more at home among the gardens of England!

Garden is the only word to express the appearance of England, especially the west, where the bright green myrtle lingers through the winter, and the road-side near every town is bordered with charming cottages. At every mile I found some new object of admiration, above all in the healthful fresh cheeks of the sturdy, yet delicate-complexioned lasses tripping away, basket in hand, from the markets, in numbers startling to one who had lived long where the arrival of one fair white face was an event.

I reached the station near York, whence I had to take a conveyance to reach by a cross-country road the house where I knew one of my brothers, Rupert, assembled as many of our family as possible at Christmas time.

The little inn was able to supply a gig, driven by a decayed post-boy. Plunging at once into questioning conversation, I found, without revealing who I was, an old acquaintance in the driver. Not many years older than myself, soured, disappointed, racked

in health, he took a different view of life to anything I had yet heard. All along my road through England I had been struck by the prosperous condition of the well-to-do-people I had met in first-class carriages. His occupation, his glory, was departed; he was obliged to do anything, and wear anything, instead of his once smart costume, and once pleasant occupation—instead of his gay jacket, and rapid ride, and handsome presents from travellers, and good dinners from landlords. He had a score of tales to tell of others worse off than himself—of landlords of posting-houses in the work-house, and smart four-in-hand coachmen begging their bread—of farmers sunk down to labourers; and other doleful stories of the fate of those who were not strong enough for the race of life in England. Then I began to see that there were two sides to the life that looked so brilliant out of the plate-glass windows of a first-class carriage.

Thus thinking and talking, as I approached the place where, unexpected, I was to appear before a gathering of my relations, my flow of spirits died away. The proud consciousness of having conquered fortune, the beauty of the winter scenery (for winter, with its hoar frost shading the trees and foliage, has strange dazzling beauty to the eyes of those who have been accustomed to the one perpetual green-brown of semi-tropical Australia) had filled me full to overflowing with bounding joyousness. Gaily I had answered back to the "Good night, master," of the passing peasantry, and vigorously puffed at my favourite pipe, in clouds that rivalled and rolled along with the clouds of mist that rose from the sweating horse. But the decayed postilion's stories of misery, in which he seemed to revel, damped me. My pipe went out, and my chin

sank despondingly on my breast. At length I asked, "Did he know the Barnards?" "Oh, yes, he knew them all." Mr. Rupert had been very lucky with the railroad through one of his farms. He had ridden a pair at Miss Jane's wedding, and driven a mourning coach at Miss Mary's funeral. The mare in the gig had belonged to Mr. Rupert, and had been a rare good hunter. Mr. Charles had doctored him for his rheumatics. "Did he know any more?" "Oh, yes; there was Master Alfred; he went abroad somewhere to 'furren parts.' Some people say he's dead, got killed, or hung, or something; and some say he's made a power of money. He was a wild slip of a lad. Many a time he's been out in the roads, with some one I know very well, snaring hares and tickling trout. There's a mark on my forehead now, where I fell, when he put a furze bush under the tail of a colt I was breaking. He was a droll chap, surely." There was scarcely a kind feeling in the poor man's breast. The loss of his occupation, poverty, and drink, had sadly changed the fine country lad, barely ten years older than myself, whom I had left behind in England. So, turning, I said, "Well, Joe, you don't seem to remember me; I am Alfred Barnard."—"Lord, sir," he answered in a whining tone, "I beg your pardon. You are a great gentleman; I always thought you would be. So, you are going to dine with Mr. Rupert? Well, sir, I hope you won't forget a Christmas-box, for old acquaintance sake?" I was repelled, and wished myself back in Australia; my mind began to misgive me as to the wisdom of my unexpected visit.

It was bright moonlight when we drove into the village. I had a mile to walk; I would not let chattering Joe drive me; so left him happy over a

hot supper, with no stinted allowance of ale. I walked on quickly until approaching the old house. I paused. My courage failed as I passed through the gate; the clang disturbed the dogs—they began to bark fiercely. I was a stranger; the dogs that knew me were all dead. Twice I paced round, with difficulty repressing my emotion, before I could find courage to approach the door. The peals of laughter, the gay music that rang out from time to time, the lights flying from window to window of the upper rooms, filled me with pleasing-painful feelings, long unknown. There was folly in my mysterious arrival; but romance is part of a life of solitude. Unreasonably, I was for a moment vexed that they could be so merry; but next moment better thoughts prevailed. I stepped to the well-remembered door, and rang a great peal; the maid opened it to me without question, for many guests were expected. As I stooped to lay aside my cloak and cap, a lovely child in white ran down the stairs, threw her arms round my neck, and, with a hearty kiss, cried, "I have caught you under the mistletoe, cousin Alfred." Then she started from me, and loosening her hold, and staring at me with large timid brown eyes, said,—"Who are you? you are not a new uncle, are you?" Oh! how my heart was relieved! the child saw a likeness; I should not be disowned. All my plans, all my preparations were forgotten; I was in the midst of them; and after fifteen years I saw again the Christmas fire, the Christmas table, the Christmas faces, that I had dreamed of so often! To describe that night is impossible. Long after midnight we sat; the children unwillingly left my knees for bed; my brothers gazed and wondered; my sisters crowded round me, kissed my brown bearded cheeks, and pressed my sun-burned hands.

Many new scenes of blessed Christmas may I have—never one like that which welcomed the wanderer home !

Extract of a letter from Mrs. Rupert Barnard to her sister-in-law, in London.

* * * * *

“ I am happy to hear, my dear Maria, that you and the baby are getting on so nicely. Isn't Mr. D. delighted to have a boy at last ! The wedding went off very cheerfully, although it was arranged in Alfred's usual curious way. We walked to the little church in the park, and Lord Holmesdale's chaplain performed the ceremony. Amy looked extremely nice, I assure you in (here follow two pages describing the dresses), and although I think Alfred, with his prospects and property, might have done better, still, considering he is going back to that horrid place, perhaps it is all for the best. At any rate he never asked my advice.

“ And where do you think they have gone for their wedding trip ? You'll never guess.—I recommended Paris or Brighton.—To Nottinghamshire, somewhere near the Dukeries, to spend a month in fox-hunting before returning to Australia ! But he was always an oddity. Thank goodness, my boy, though he is very fond of his uncle Alfred, has none of those rude tastes, and I hope” * * * *

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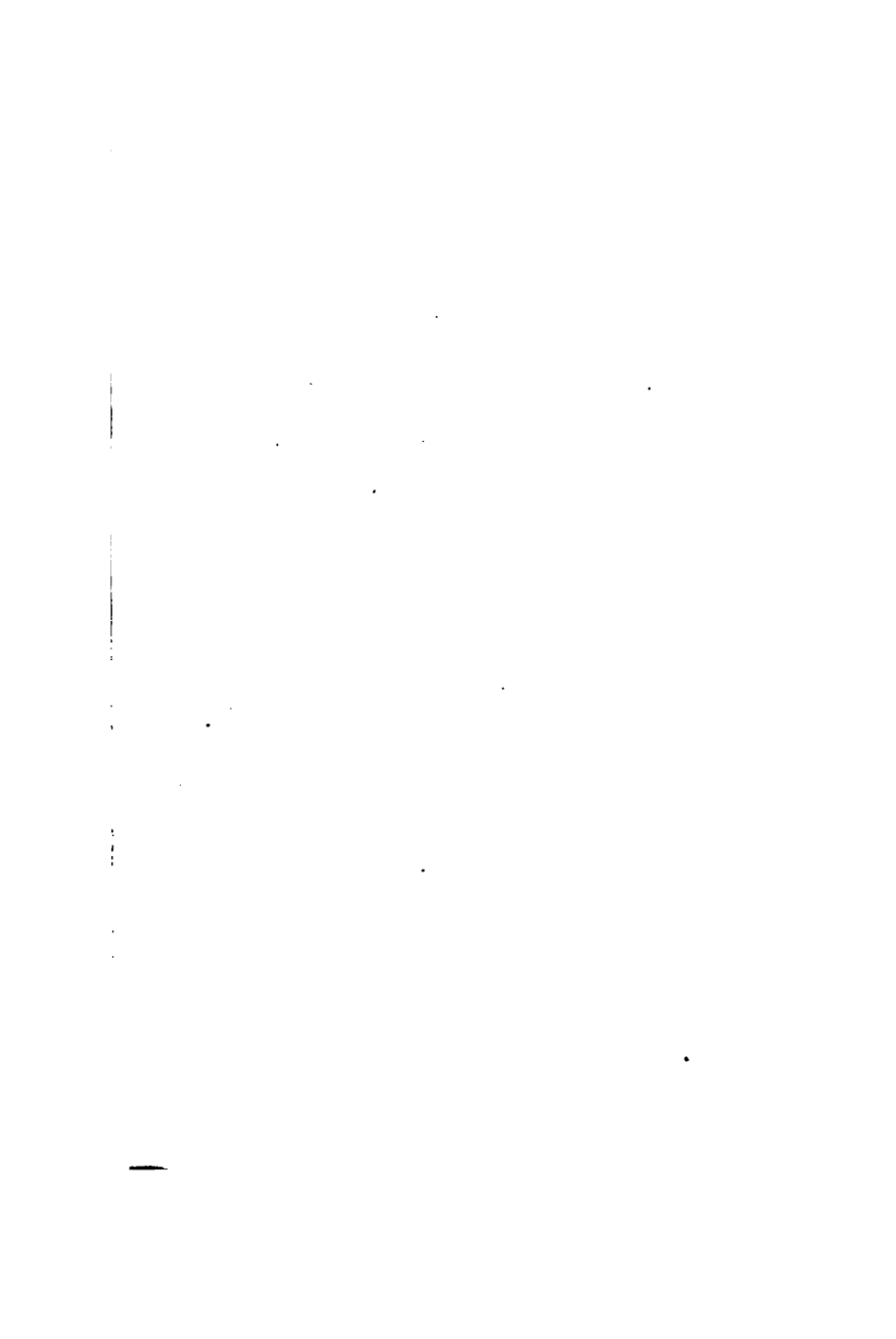
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